



BRARY
BRARY



OF CO
OF CO



BRARY
BRARY



OF CO
OF CO



BRARY
BRARY



OF CO
OF CO

**THE DISILLUSIONS
OF A CROWN PRINCESS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

RASPUTIN
AND THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION

With Sixteen Illustrations

"The whole volume is a bright light in dark places. It does not reach to the end of Russia's road, but it serves to define some of the difficulties ahead. It makes the Lenines and Trozskys stand out with the distinctness of a vivid warning."

—*New York Sun.*





Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

CECILE, EX-CROWN PRINCESS OF GERMANY
IN 18TH CENTURY COSTUME

THE DISILLUSIONS OF A CROWN PRINCESS

BEING THE STORY OF THE
COURTSHIP AND MARRIED LIFE OF
CECILE, EX-CROWN PRINCESS OF GERMANY

BY
PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL
(COUNT PAUL VASSILI)

AUTHOR OF
"BEHIND THE VEIL AT THE RUSSIAN COURT,"
"RASPUTIN AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION,"
"GERMANY UNDER THREE EMPERORS,"
ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY
LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
MCMXIX

DD227

.S
C4R3

COPYRIGHT, 1919,
BY THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1919,
BY JOHN LANE COMPANY



DEC 20 1919

Press of
J. J. Little & Ives Co.
New York, U. S. A.

©C1A561084

201

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA OF RUSSIA	11
II CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YEARS . . .	21
III THE DEATH OF THE GRAND DUKE OF MECKLEMBURG	30
IV THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS ALEX- ANDRINE	40
V A FAIRY PRINCE	49
VI WILLIAM, CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY	58
VII AT FLORENCE	68
VIII MARRIAGE	77
IX THE SURROUNDINGS AND COURT OF THE NEW CROWN PRINCESS	86
X THE CLOVEN FOOT BEGINS TO SHOW .	95
XI A YOUNG WIFE'S MISERY	104
XII THE SPHINX BY MOONLIGHT . . .	113
XIII WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT ABOUT THE CROWN PRINCESS IN BERLIN . . .	124
XIV THE CROWN PRINCE'S RETURN . .	133
XV MOTHER, MOTHER, WHY CAN'T YOU COME TO ME	142

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVI	THE CROWN PRINCE'S BRUTALITY . . .	151
XVII	IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR . . .	162
XVII	YEARS OF SADNESS	171
XIX	ROYALTY'S LAST PAGANT	180
XX	THE BEGINNING OF THE END	189
XXI	THE FALL OF THE COLOSSUS	198
XXII	THE NECESSITY OF RESIGNATION	207
XXIII	THE FRIEND IN NEED	215

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cecile, Ex-Crown Princess of Germany in 18th Century Costume	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
The Ex-Crown Princess with Her Brother and Sister .	22
The Princess Alexandrine and the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin	30
King Christian and Queen Alexandrine of Denmark .	42
Grand Duke Michael Nicholayewitsch and His Wife .	46
The Crown Prince at the Time of His Marriage . .	58
Frederick William, Ex-Crown Prince of Germany . .	58
Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholayewitsch of Russia . .	66
Ex-Crown Princess Cecile	78
The Kaiserin in 1881	86
The Kaiser in 1883	86
The Ex-Crown Prince and Ex-Crown Princess . .	94
Ex-Crown Princess and Sons	102
The Ex-Crown Prince with His Wife and Three Sons .	112
The Ex-Crown Princess with Her Two Oldest Sons and the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin . .	130
The Daughter and Son-in-Law of the Ex-Kaiser . .	180

	FACING PAGE
The Ex-Kaiserin, the Ex-Crown Princess and Her Little Daughter	196
The Empress Frederick	206
The Emperor Frederick III	206

**THE DISILLUSIONS
OF A CROWN PRINCESS**



THE DISILLUSIONS OF A CROWN PRINCESS

CHAPTER I

THE GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA OF RUSSIA

It was a bright winter's day. The vast halls of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg were filled with a great crowd of people eager to catch a glimpse of one of the fairest brides that had ever been led to the altar of its chapel. The Imperial Family and the Court were celebrating the nuptials of the niece of the Czar Alexander II, the daughter of his favourite brother, the Grand Duchess Anastasia Michaylowna of Russia, with the heir to the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and to one of the largest private fortunes in Europe.

The bride was barely eighteen, a tall, superb girl with wonderful brown eyes, slight and slim in appearance, and with that distinguished look which education alone does not give, but which proceeds

12 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

from a long line of ancestors, all of them used to command and to occupy a prominent position in the world. The bridegroom, a handsome man, but extremely frail and delicate, looked tenderly at the splendid woman whom he was about to make his wife. All the great world, not only of Russia but also of foreign lands, was there, had gathered to witness the interesting ceremony. But few knew that this marriage, which had given rise to so many discussions, and which had been so variously commented upon by the public in two countries, was a love match on one side only—that whilst the Prince of Mecklenburg was devoted to the young Princess to whom he was pledging his faith, she had been almost compelled to accept him as her husband by parents eager to secure for their daughter a magnificent establishment, with the prospect of a Grand Ducal crown in the near future.

Anastasia Michaylowna had been brought up most strictly. Her mother, an exceedingly clever but imperious woman, had ruled her family and household with an iron hand, and had never allowed any of her children to object to the arrangements made in regard to their education and training. She had watched over them with unusual

The Grand Duchess Anastasia 13

care, with the result that all her sons, as well as her only daughter, became distinguished people, very different from the other Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, whose only aim in life seemed to be pleasure and enjoyment of the good things it had to offer them. The family of the Grand Duke Michael Nicholayewitsch proved an exception to this rule, thanks to the solicitude with which he and his wife had striven to develop in the young minds which Providence had committed to their care, a sense of their responsibility in the world. But at the same time they had never allowed any of their decisions to be discussed, and when the Grand Duchess Anastasia was told that she had to marry the Hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, she did not for one single moment think of asserting herself, or saying that she did not care to be sent so far away from her native land, and that the personality of her intended bridegroom did not inspire her with enthusiasm.

This did not mean that the Prince was not attractive. On the contrary, he was a charming, clever and handsome man, with extremely pleasant manners, and a general favourite in society. Even in St. Petersburg, where, as a rule, foreigners were

14 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

not looked upon with favour at the time I am writing of, he had made himself popular during his frequent visits to the Russian capital, the residence of his sister, the wife of the Grand Duke Wladimir. Unfortunately, to counterbalance these attractions which, added to his fortune and general prospects, made him one of the most coveted "partis" in Europe, the Grand Duke had since his childhood been extremely delicate, and suffered from a heart complaint which compelled him to remain sometimes for weeks in a recumbent position, and obliged him to spend all his winters in the South. This would not perhaps have been so important, though it is easy to understand that no girl cares to become the nurse of an invalid from the very first day of her marriage, but there was something worse than this, because the Prince, in addition to his chronic ailment, suffered from another, far more objectionable. He used to get periodical attacks of eczema on the face and body, which necessitated his retiring into complete seclusion for long periods of time. This did not make him an attractive husband, and the hesitation, disgust and apprehensions of the young Grand Duchess can easily be understood. Unfortunately for her, she had made no

secret of her repugnance, and busybodies had informed the Prince of it; consequently he found himself, from the first day of his marriage, in an embarrassing position. He was ardently in love with his bride, but he did not feel sufficiently courageous to try to win her over to him and induce her to look upon him with lenient eyes. A misunderstanding existed between them from the first hour of their union, and, unfortunately for Anastasia Michaylowna, it grew as time went on, until at last the great world of the whole of Europe began to comment upon it.

The young couple left Russia for Mecklenburg immediately after their wedding. There the Princess found herself thrown into a circle thoroughly uncongenial to her, and, furthermore, discovered that considerable hostility against her had existed long before she had arrived to take up her place at the Court of Schwerin. Her father-in-law was married to a haughty and, at the same time, dowdy woman, who from the first moment that she had set eyes upon Anastasia Michaylowna, had begun to hate her for the immense dowry which she had brought, for her splendid jewels, and her lovely clothes, which surpassed everything that Mecklen-

16 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

burg had ever seen before. The Palace of Schwerin, though magnificent, was a gloomy building, where the bride found herself lonely and unhappy, and where she was not even allowed to arrange her own apartments according to her personal taste. The ladies of the court were mostly old frumps, without interests in life beyond that of their household occupations and the exigencies of the strictest of etiquette. They did not approve of Anastasia Michaylowna; they thought her fast and giddy, and they soon made her life a perfect burden. It was not strange, therefore, that the impetuous and ardent girl should take the bit between her teeth, and declare that she would not live in Mecklenburg for anything in the world. It was easy for her to win her husband over to her point of view. The poor man would have done anything to please her, and perhaps at heart was himself not so very sorry to escape the dull atmosphere of Schwerin for more congenial climes. His health furnished him with an excellent pretext for spending part of the year abroad, and immediately after the birth of Anastasia's first child, the Princess Alexandrine, who was later on to become Queen of Denmark, the Hereditary Grand Duke and Duchess started for

Italy, where they spent almost uninterruptedly the next three or four years, until the death of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg obliged them to return to Schwerin, of which Prince Frederic Francis became the Sovereign.

Anastasia tried to play the Queen for a few months, and then found that she could not bear it. But when she expressed her intention of returning to Italy or France for the winter months, she found herself confronted by an opposition she had never expected. The people of Mecklenburg would not hear of their Grand Duke not taking up his residence among them, and his wife was severely criticised for wishing him to do otherwise. The question of his health was declared to be merely a pretext, and public disapproval became so strong that the question was raised whether the Sovereign ought not to be asked to abdicate in favour of his baby son, under whose name the country could be administered by a Regent.

But there Anastasia Michaylowna's spirit rose up in anger. She would not consent to such a thing. The Grand Duke was the lawful Sovereign of his realm, and he could do what he liked in regard to his own personal residence, the more so that Meck-

18 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

lenburg had no constitution, and that he was an absolute monarch. She, of course, carried the day, and a compromise was finally effected, by virtue of which the Grand Ducal pair were to reside five months of the year in Mecklenburg, and could remain where they liked for the rest of the time, on condition, however, that any children they might have were to be born in Mecklenburg. It is to this circumstance that is due the fact that the Princess Cecile-Augusta-Mary, who was to become the wife of the German Crown Prince, saw the light of the day in the old castle of Schwerin on the 20th of September, 1886.

She was but a few weeks old when her mother carried her away to Cannes, where she had acquired one of the loveliest villas of this lovely place, to which she gave the name of the Villa Wenden. It was a palace rather than a country house, and the refined taste of Anastasia Michaylowna furnished and arranged it with exquisite taste. It became her favourite residence and she lived there more like a private person than a Sovereign, seeing her numerous friends in an informal way, and playing hostess to all the illustrious ones who flocked to the Riviera during the winter months. She used to

spend her money lavishly, much to the disgust of the people of Mecklenburg, who said openly that she had no right to squander abroad resources which would have been better employed in her own, or rather, in her husband's country. Soon a legend was formed around her, and she became the victim of the most unsparing criticism. This only infuriated her, and made her take a special delight in shocking the people who condemned her for no other reason than because she did not care to live among them. She was very fond, perhaps too fond, of the gambling tables at Monte Carlo, where she could often be seen staking thousands of francs at the Trente et Quarante, whilst everybody knew that the Grand Duke had been compelled to remain in Cannes on account of an attack of one or the other of his numerous ailments. Of course people condemned the Grand Duchess for her apparent heartlessness, and none among all her so-called friends and acquaintances had sufficient honesty and generosity to try to make the world understand that, blamable though her conduct might appear, it proceeded more from a spirit of bravado than from any ill feeling towards her invalid husband. The latter was perhaps the only one who understood what was

20 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

going on in the soul and heart of his beautiful wife, because he never blamed her; on the contrary, he always stood by her and defended her against her numerous adversaries. Frederick Francis's nature was a chivalrous one, and, besides, never while he lived did he cease to love his wife and to trust her, a fact of which she was aware, and for which, though she did not own to it in public, she felt at heart most grateful.

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YEARS

THE Grand Duke and Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin had three children. One son, who in due time succeeded his father, and who at the present day is one of the numerous dispossessed German Sovereigns in quest of a home and vocation in the world, and two daughters, of whom the eldest was to become Queen of Denmark, whilst the youngest is the lovable Princess whose sad story I am about to relate. Cecile Augusta Mary was from her baby days a charming little creature, full of fun and mirth, always kind and good, and always ready to help others. She was her father's favourite, and during the long days when he was confined to his room, unable to see anybody, it was his little daughter who was his constant companion. Cecile was an amusing child, with a sense of humour rarely met with in Germany. There, as a rule, people are solemn and dignified, especially in the royal and imperial circles to which the little Princess belonged.

22 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Her Mecklenburg relations used to say that her mother brought her up very badly, because the Grand Duchess insisted on her children being allowed to enjoy perfect liberty in their childish games and amusements. She dressed them very simply, and let them romp on the beach in Mecklenburg, and especially at Cannes, where they were permitted to remain for whole afternoons stretched out on the sand, clothed in the scantiest and plainest of garments, and playing with other babes sometimes much more richly attired than themselves. One of the greatest pleasures of Cecile and her sister was to be taken by their beautiful mother to drink chocolate and eat cakes at Rumpelmayers, the fashionable confectioner of Cannes, and to drive about with her in the woods and mountains surrounding the lovely French health resort. The Grand Duchess Anastasia was passionately fond of her French home, where she could enjoy the society of her father, the aged Grand Duke Michael, and her brothers, who always wintered there. She surrounded herself with Russians and with Frenchmen, occasionally with Englishmen and Americans, and always avoided Germans, who inspired her with a dislike she never took the trouble to dissimulate:



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

THE EX-CROWN PRINCESS (LEFT)
WITH HER BROTHER AND HER SISTER



dislike which was intensified in later years when, a few months before her husband's death, the latter received an impertinent letter from the Kaiser, advising him to divorce his wife, who, as he expressed it, "was not fit to occupy the position of a reigning German Princess." The insult rankled in the mind of Anastasia Michaylowna, and she was never to forgive or forget it.

When Princess Cecile was ten years old the question arose of choosing a governess for her. Her mother wished a Frenchwoman to be entrusted with the task of superintending her education, because she had not been quite satisfied with the manner in which the German instructress of her eldest daughter, the Princess Alexandrine, had performed her task; but there the Grand Duke interfered, saying that he feared the choice of a lady belonging to the nation which was supposed to be the irreconcilable enemy of Germany would excite such indignation in Mecklenburg that the unpopularity of his consort would become more pronounced than ever. A compromise was effected between husband and wife, and an Englishwoman was selected as teacher and companion of the Princess Cecile, whose eldest sister about that time became engaged to Prince

24 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Christian of Denmark, the eldest grandson of the old King. She was a bonnie Princess, this sweet Alexandrine, with the lovely eyes and splendid figure of her mother, and the pleasant smile of her father. Her marriage was entirely one of affection, and though it was not approved of at Berlin, where the Kaiser would have preferred seeing her become the bride of some Prussian Prince, it proved popular in Mecklenburg, where the people felt flattered at the prospect of their Princess becoming in time a Queen, and where there had existed a fear that she would eventually be married in Russia, to some relative of the unpopular and much-disliked Grand Duchess; so great preparations for the wedding were made everywhere, and public subscriptions were started in order to purchase handsome wedding presents for the future bride. Prince Christian came to spend part of the summer with his betrothed at Doberan in Mecklenburg, where the Grand Ducal family generally lived during the warm season, and he endeared himself to the haughty Mecklenburg aristocracy, who were especially flattered to find that he could speak perfect German. This was told the Grand Duchess Anastasia, probably with the intention of annoying her.

She perfectly understood the motive, and retaliated by replying: "Really, I did not know that he could speak such a barbarous language. I should have imagined that the King and Queen of Denmark would not have allowed him to learn it, after the manner in which they were treated by Prussia in 1864."

It is a remarkable thing that the antipathy of Anastasia Michaylowna for everything that was German was shared by her youngest child, the Princess Cecile, from her earliest years. She was reported to have said when told of her sister's engagement: "I shall also do like Drina, and marry an enemy of Prussia and of the Kaiser," for which remark she was severely reproved by the Grand Duke, her father, who feared that the intemperate language of his favourite daughter would be misconstrued by those who heard it. The poor man often found himself, to use the vulgar phrase, "between the devil and the deep sea," because, after all, he was a German himself, who had been brought up in all the old traditions which prevailed at the education of every German Prince, and he found himself perpetually in conflict with his consort, who made no secret of the contempt in which she held

26 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

her subjects and everything that reminded her of the "Vaterland" which she made fun of every time she had an opportunity.

Cecile was not a studious child. She loved the sun, the flowers, nature, birds and animals, but she hated being compelled to study and made no secret of being bored and mystified by the books she had to read. On the other hand, she had a wonderful talent for languages, loved music, and was a painter of no mean ability, sketching everything that caught her eye or her fancy, and sometimes allowing her pencil to draw caricatures which sent those to whom she showed them into paroxysms of laughter, but which, on the other hand, drew upon her head the wrath of the persons whose peculiarities she had caught so cleverly. Thus one day when she had reproduced the comical walk and general appearance of a Mecklenburg lady of high rank, the latter complained to the Kaiser, who, in his turn, wrote the Grand Duke one of those insulting letters he was so fond of sending his various Royal relatives, in which he advised Frederick Francis to watch over the conduct of his daughters, who might otherwise come to imitate their mother's bad example. The Grand Duke was not the kind of man to allow such

insolence to pass unchallenged, and in his turn he requested William II to mind his own business, and not give any unsolicited advice. He even went further than that; he caused the name of the lady who had forgotten herself so far as to appeal to the Emperor against the daughter of her own Monarch to be struck off the list of those generally invited to Court activities at Schwerin, and this action so rejoiced Grand Duchess Anastasia that she immediately communicated the news to her own particular friends, with the remark that she hoped the Grand Duke would in time so deal with all the other unbearable old ladies who had made her own life so miserable when she had arrived, a young and inexperienced bride, in Mecklenburg.

There is a curious anecdote concerning the childhood of the Princess Cecile. When her eldest sister Alexandrine was confirmed she was herself ten years old, far too young to be officially received into the Protestant Church. Nevertheless, she implored her father to permit her to share the religious instruction given to the elder Princess. When the Grand Duke asked her reason for this request she replied that she wished him to know that she intended to remain a good Lutheran all her life.

28 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

"But I shall know it later on," replied Frederick Francis, much amused at the little girl's remark.

"How can you be sure of it, Papa?" retorted the child. "You may be dead then, and I should be so unhappy to think you did not know it."

The Grand Duke started. He did not care to be reminded of his delicate state of health, and Cecile's words had affected him painfully. But he did not accede to her wishes, as it would have been going against all established precedents, and would have given rise to all kinds of unpleasant remarks. Great therefore was his surprise when on the day of the confirmation of the Princess Alexandrine, little Cecile walked into his room, with a big letter in her hand. She sat down beside her father and began reading to him her profession of the Protestant faith which she had written out herself, adding that she wished him to see it, "because it was the one she meant to recite at the time of her own confirmation, no matter when it took place," and she begged of him to write down under it that he had seen and approved it. Much disturbed in mind, the Grand Duke complied with his daughter's request. Frederick Francis was to die a few months later, in the unexpected and mysterious manner I shall pres-

ently relate; therefore, Cecile seems to have had on this occasion a premonition of the future, something of what is called in Scotland, "double sight," and she was later on to give other signs of this remarkable faculty, especially after her sad marriage, and at the beginning of the great war, when she accurately predicted some of its principal events, such as the defeat of the German armies at the Marne, and the conclusion of the armistice with its disastrous consequences for Prussia. It is also related that when the Czar Nicholas II came to Berlin the last time, on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Victoria Louise of Prussia to Prince Ernest of Cumberland, the then Crown Princess of Germany remarked to one of her intimate friends: "The Emperor of Russia will come to a sad end. I see misfortune written in his face."

CHAPTER III

THE DEATH OF THE GRAND DUKE OF MECKLENBURG

THE last months of the existence of Frederick Francis, Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, were sad and painful ones. His health, which had always been most indifferent, began to fail fast, and at last he could hardly move about, as the least exertion tired him so much that it brought on long fainting fits, each one of which it was feared might prove to be the last. His physicians at about that time warned the Grand Duchess that in all probability her husband's days were numbered. She did not believe them. She had got so used to seeing the Grand Duke ill and suffering that she never expected his condition to grow any worse, and on the contrary made plans to go with him on a long journey around the world, after the Princess Alexandrine's marriage, which was fixed to take place in the course of the autumn at Schwerin, where great preparations were made in anticipation of it. In

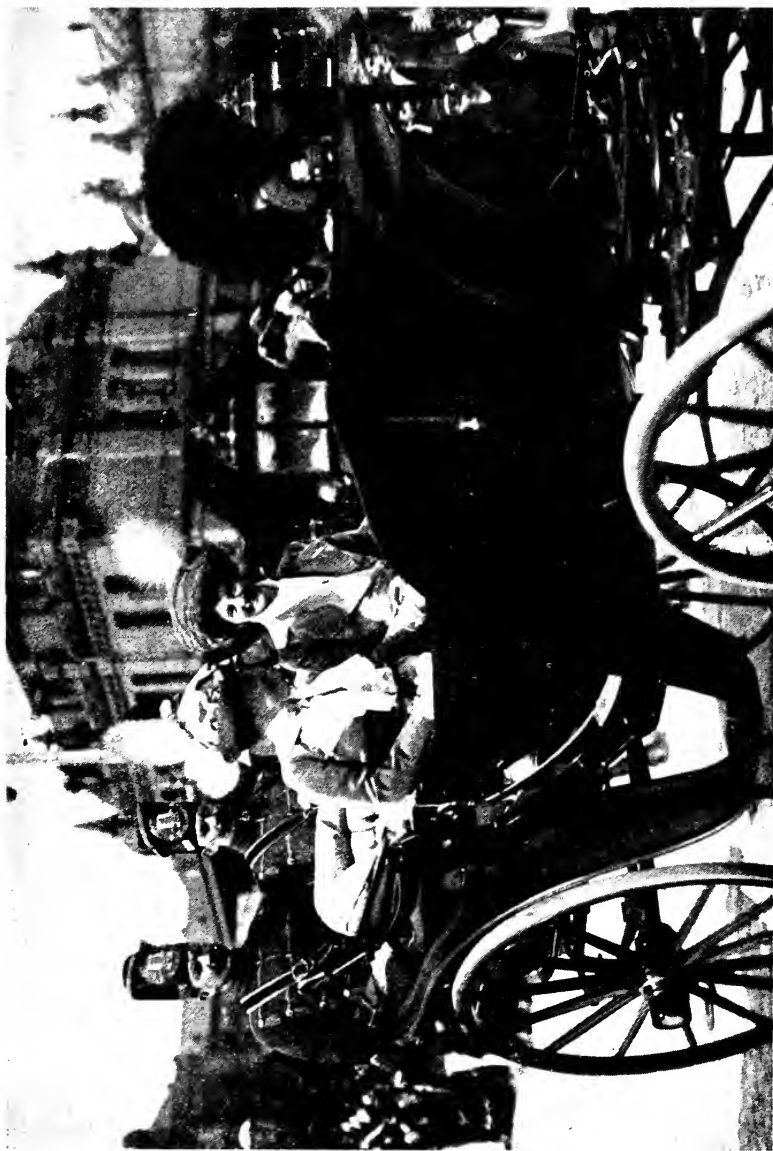


Photo by Paul Thompson.

THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRINE AND THE GRAND DUCHESS OF MECKLEMBURG-SCHWERIN



Death of the Duke of Mecklenburg 31

the meanwhile she changed nothing in her usual mode of life, went about just as she had done before, and was seen at the Opera and in the gambling rooms at Monte Carlo in company with her brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas Michaylowitsch of Russia. There were people, however, who had become aware of the fact that the state of health of Duke Frederick Francis was steadily growing worse, and who made scathing remarks concerning the so-called levity of conduct of his consort, who was represented as a heartless, cold creature, caring for nothing but her own personal amusements, and leaving her suffering husband all alone to the care of strangers and servants. They did not know that it was the sick man himself who wished his wife to leave him, because the day had come when the unfortunate Grand Duke of Mecklenburg had no more strength left to control the irrepressible Anastasia, and, besides, he was suffering acutely from remorse for having married this young and beautiful creature in his deplorable state of health. It was the consciousness that he had done her a great wrong that made him so indulgent regarding the eccentric behaviour of the Grand Duchess, and which caused him to shut his eyes on numerous oc-

32 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

casions when another man would have protested against such conduct on the part of his wife which, though innocent in itself, was yet of a nature to make people talk, and we all know that when once society talks, the person it is talking about has no chance left to escape condemnation and eventual ostracism.

Nevertheless, life went on at the Villa Wenden just as it had done formerly, with a shade more gaiety, perhaps, on account of the youthful Princess, whom her mother was beginning to take about and introduce at different balls and evening parties, of which there were so many in Cannes during the season.

Dinners were given by the Grand Duchess, at some of which the Grand Duke was not strong enough to put in an appearance, whilst at others he showed himself as usual an amiable, pleasant and courteous host. And on Easter day, Anastasia Michaylowna arranged a huge reception, to which invitations were sent to the élite of the French and Foreign residents of Cannes.

They all came, and at the sound of a military orchestra playing joyful waltzes the evening passed quickly and pleasantly. The Grand Duke had

Death of the Duke of Mecklenburg 33

retired early to his own apartments, and no one had attempted to persuade him to remain longer with his guests, as it was so evident that he had barely sufficient strength left to return to his own rooms. After the guests had left, the Grand Duchess, who had grown slightly alarmed at her husband's strange and utterly worn appearance, went to seek him, wishing to ascertain whether he had already gone to bed. Great was her surprise not to find him there, a surprise which only increased when he was nowhere to be found in the whole of the house. Anastasia became very frightened, and herself went to explore the garden, fearing that her husband had fainted somewhere, as sometimes happened when he was overtired. But the garden also proved empty and her repeated calls remained unanswered. Suddenly she saw one of the servants running towards her, and she was told that the body of the Grand Duke had just been found on the outer side of a high fence which surrounded the grounds of the Villa Wenden, and that to all appearances he was already dead.

Anastasia Michaylowna would not believe it. She declared that it must be an error, and she sent for all the doctors in Cannes. Alas, alas, none of

34 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

them could do anything. Frederick Francis, Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, had really and truly passed away.

How he came to be found on the outer side of the fence no one ever knew. Many suppositions were made, among others that a robber had been discovered by the Duke in the grounds of the mansion, and had thrown him over the wall. But this was hardly likely. It was also said that the Grand Duke had suddenly become dizzy, and had fallen over the wall without any one being at hand to pick him up. Also that he had purposely thrown himself into the road from the height of the walls surrounding the grounds of his residence, and, again, it was admitted that the sad affair might have been purely accident and nothing else. But the fact remained that no reasonable explanation could be found for this mysterious end. The body bore no traces of violence of any kind, save a small bruise on the temple where the dead man's head had struck a stone, and the official report of this strange end merely mentioned the fact that the Grand Duke had suddenly succumbed to an attack of heart failure.

Anastasia Michaylowna was a widow, and,

Death of the Duke of Mecklenburg 35

strange though it might seem to those who had been aware of the sad disappointments of the early years of her married life, she sincerely mourned the husband with whom the world had thought that she had had so little in common. The fact was that she was far too clever not to realise the protection which the presence of the Grand Duke at her side afforded her, and she was also too just at heart not to be grateful to him for his unbounded trust in her, and for the continual courtesy and kindness with which he had treated her, in spite of the strenuous efforts of his family to estrange him from her. She also knew that henceforward her position would be very different from what it had been formerly. According to the laws of the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg, the country would have to be administered by a Regent during the minority of the new Sovereign, and this Regent would have the right to compel the widowed Duchess to take up her residence in Schwerin or else deprive her of her jointure and the custody of her daughters. She did not care for the jointure, being very rich on her own account, but she did not want her girls to be brought up in Germany, according to German ideas, and, above everything else, she did not care

36 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

to give up her French home in order to play second fiddle in Schwerin. So it was with considerable apprehension that she looked forward to the future and to what it might hold in store for her. She need not have worried about it, however, for the will of the Grand Duke Frederick Francis was entirely in favour of his wife, to whom he left absolutely all that he possessed in the way of private fortune, and whom he appointed sole guardian of their two daughters, with the right to select their future place of residence. She was to be allowed absolute latitude in regard to their marriage, and was not to be subjected to any control in the way of their education or maintenance. And though her son would have to reside in Mecklenburg, the father added a clause in his will in which he expressed the wish that he would spend a few weeks every year with his mother, no matter where the latter might be living. In short, the poor Grand Duke never gave a greater proof of the love and tenderness which he had borne for his wife than in his last testament, every line of which breathed perfect trust and confidence in Anastasia Michaylowna.

The people of Schwerin rose up in anger when they learned the terms of their deceased Sovereign's

Death of the Duke of Mecklenburg 37

will. They had hoped that the widowed Grand Duchess would no longer be permitted to indulge in what was called the extravagances of her conduct, now that her husband was no longer there to countenance them, and in Berlin the Kaiser had openly spoken of the possibility of confining her in some lonely castle in Germany, where she would be compelled to end her days in solitude and obscurity. The thought that, on the contrary, she would be henceforward in possession of even more independence than before her widowhood was very bitter for some people, and a flood of calumnies was launched against the unfortunate woman, calumnies which went so far that rumours arose accusing her of having had a hand in the Grand Duke's mysterious death. Useless to say that people were found who repeated to Anastasia Michaylowna these sordid and wicked stories, and one may easily imagine how the tale exasperated her, the more so that she became aware it had been related to her daughters, and that a strong effort had been made to estrange them from her. She swore an undying hatred of Mecklenburg, and of all "the gossips and old frumps," as she called them, of Schwerin, and for several years she never set her foot in the country

38 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

over which she had ruled. In defiance of public opinion there she had her eldest daughter's marriage solemnised at Cannes instead of in Germany, and, so to say, compelled the haughty family which had been so unkind to her to come to France, in order to be present at the marriage of the first child of the late Grand Duke Frederick Francis to the heir to the Danish Crown.

She became quite reckless in her expressions of dislike and of contempt for everything that was German, and for everybody who was bold enough to express in her presence his or her sympathy for Germany and its rulers. Once, at a large evening party in Paris, she publicly spoke of the Kaiser as "the greatest hypocrite in Europe." One can easily imagine how this definition of his character offended William II, and how much he resented it; and it is therefore not surprising that later on, when the opportunity was granted him, he set himself to humiliate the widowed Grand Duchess in every possible way, going so far as to prevent her daughter, the Princess Cecile, after the latter's marriage with the German Crown Prince, to see or to communicate with her mother. Anastasia Michaylowna might have created a scandal had she cared

Death of the Duke of Mecklenburg 39

to do so, but she was a clever woman, far too wise in her generation to do anything that might have had a disagreeable influence on the life of the Princess Cecile, and the only revenge which she took at the ill treatment dealt her by the Kaiser was to shrug her shoulders, with the significant remark: "I am younger than the Emperor, and can hope to survive him; and when he is dead nothing that he has ever done will matter."

CHAPTER IV

THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRINE

ANASTASIA MICHAYLOWNA had triumphed in a certain sense, because her husband's death, instead of altering her position for the worse, had, on the contrary, secured for her an independence for which she had been secretly yearning all her life. In spite of the predictions which were being made everywhere that she would marry again as soon as her mourning was over, she made up her mind never to do so. Her position was assured; she was a Grand Duchess of Russia, which in her eyes was far more important than being a Dowager Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg; she had plenty of money, youth, good looks, and intelligence; what more could she require? Free from German control she could live her life according to her own leanings and fancies, and in a certain sense compel her enemies to eat humble pie. She knew very well that, according to precedent, she ought to have her daugh-

ter's marriage solemnised in Schwerin, but it was part of her plans to show her disdain for everything which pertained to Mecklenburg, so she declared to the Regent that the Princess Alexandrine would be married from her own house, and that she did not consider the castle of Schwerin as belonging to her in any way whatsoever. She insisted, moreover, on her son coming to France for the ceremony, and on the Regent, Duke John Albert of Mecklenburg, accompanying him. She compelled the ministers, whose duty it was to sign the settlements of the young Princess, to make the long journey to Cannes, and when they arrived, she received them as ungraciously as possible, and though she made sumptuous presents of jewels, laces and furs to the future bride, she forced Mecklenburg to pay for her trousseau, much to the indignation of everybody there, as people had hoped she would do it out of her own ample means. In short, she showed herself as disagreeable as possible, and carried things so far that she sent back some of the diamonds which were part of the Princess's dowry, saying that they were not handsome enough, and insisted on their being exchanged for stones of considerably more value.

42 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

And what added further to the anger of her former subjects, the Grand Duchess, though she obliged the Grand Ducal House of Schwerin to pay for the trousseau of its fair Princess, ordered the trousseau in Paris, so that the good German money which was spent upon it all went into the hands of French milliners, dressmakers, and tradesmen. One may imagine the amount of gossip which her conduct provoked throughout the whole of Germany.

Nevertheless, the wedding, which was solemnised with great magnificence, passed off very well and nothing arose to mar its splendour. It was so brilliant a marriage that everybody at last agreed that it could not be attended with too much ceremony. After all, the Princess was wedding the heir to the Danish Crown; she would be one day a Queen, and it must be remembered that in those days Royalty was not at a discount, as is the case at present. She was also entering a family whose connections were the best in Europe, was becoming the niece of the Queen of England, of the Dowager Empress of Russia, and of the King of Greece. Rarely had the House of Mecklenburg seen one of its Princesses make such a splendid match, and even the exuberant spirits of Anastasia Michaylowna were sub-



Photo by Paul Thompson.

KING CHRISTIAN AND QUEEN ALEXANDRINE
OF DENMARK



Marriage of Princess Alexandrine 43

dued into something like solemnity when she saw her daughter put her hand into that of handsome Prince Christian of Denmark. Though the marriage meant for her separation from a dearly-loved child, she was reasonable enough not to wish to stand between that child and her happiness, and she gladly gave her into the keeping of the amiable and gifted young man who had wooed and won her. There was also a feeling of triumph mingled with her maternal emotions on the wedding day. Her Mecklenburg relatives had taken delight in saying that, on account of her own careless and giddy conduct, she would never be able to get her daughters married, for no German Princes would ever consent to take them for their wives—it did not occur to them that the Princess Alexandrine and her sister could marry outside of Germany. And here was her beloved Drina accepted in a family that had always been renowned for the strictness of its views and the austerity of its principles. It was indeed a triumph, and Anastasia Michaylowna would not have been human had she not understood it or shown herself indifferent to it. After all her troubles, destiny was at last beginning to treat her very well

44 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

indeed, perhaps even better than she had had the right to expect.

After the young bride had taken her leave from her mother and family, and had started for her new home, life at the Villa Wenden did not change very much. The Princess Cecile was only twelve years old, and could not yet be a companion for her mother, who kept her closely confined to her school-room. The Grand Duchess, though so careless in regard to her own actions, was exceedingly prudent in everything which concerned her children, and she understood very well that the gay society which flocks in winter to the French Riviera is not precisely that with which girls should mingle. She was an ideal mother, whatever people might have to say about her in other respects, and she brought up her daughters admirably, provided them with excellent principles, and took the greatest trouble to give them a brilliant, and at the same time, a solid education. Princess Cecile hardly saw any one outside her own family circle, and the only people she was allowed to mingle with freely were her Russian relatives, of whom there were always a large number in Cannes during the season. She led a healthy, quiet life, spent mostly in the open

air, and read a great deal, especially historic books, of which she was inordinately fond. Her mother taught her needlework, and she became an expert needlewoman, sending to various exhibitions wonderful pieces of satin, embroidered with lovely flowers, that from a distance could easily have been taken for real. She played tennis and golf, rode and drove in the beautiful neighbourhood of Cannes, and was as happy as the day was long. Of marriage she never thought at all, and even after her confirmation she did not appear eager to make her début in society; indeed, she showed herself rather apprehensive when at last the Grand Duchess told her that she was about to take her to her first ball.

That first ball! The poor Princess was often to think about it, and to remember it with sadness. It took place in the beautiful villa of her uncle, the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, and was long talked of at Cannes as one of the most splendid entertainments that had ever been given there. Princess Cecile, dressed in willowy white tulle, with one row of pearls round her neck, was the cynosure of all eyes, and unanimously declared the most charming débutante the French Riviera had ever seen. Her mother, thanks to her affectation in only

46 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

calling herself a Russian Grand Duchess, and her open dislike of everything that savoured of Germany and Germanism, was not considered as the widow of a German Sovereign by the gay world which filled the salons of her brother and sister-in-law, the fascinating and amiable Countess Torby; so that no one thought of distrusting either her or her lovely daughter, as might perhaps have been the case had it been remembered that they belonged to the nation whose conduct in 1870 was not yet forgotten. Anastasia had been accepted by France as a Russian, and was everywhere spoken of as a Russian, and as a Russian only, and the great popularity which she had acquired and was enjoying had in a certain sense been extended to her children, notwithstanding the fact that her son was but seldom seen in Cannes after his father's death. So that when pretty Cecile was presented to society, everybody wished her all the good things she was entitled to, and hoped she would soon marry a fairy Prince with whom she would be happy forever after.

There were many foreigners invited to this ball which the Grand Duke Michael gave for his niece's début in the gay world, of which she seemed des-



Photo by Paul Thompson.

GRAND DUKE MICHAEL NICHOLAYEWITSCH AND HIS WIFE



tined to become one of the fairest ornaments in the course of time. Among them was a shy young man, who was hiding his personality under the veil of an incognito, and who, to the few who were aware of it, was no less a personage than the heir to the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, Frederick William, the eldest son of the Kaiser and of his consort, the Empress Augusta Victoria. He was about twenty-one years of age at that time, and had been sent on a journey to Italy and to the French Riviera by his father, who wished him to have the opportunity of seeing foreign lands, and acquiring an experience which he could not possibly have obtained in Berlin. There were other reasons besides which had made it desirable for him to sojourn abroad. His reported infatuation for a lovely foreigner had been the cause of much concern to the Emperor, who at one time had feared that he would marry her and renounce his rights of succession to the throne—a step which would not at all have met with his favour. The Prince had therefore been told to go to Italy, and to stay for some weeks at Bordighera, whence he had been allowed to go to Nice and Cannes to see his Russian relatives, who were spending the winter in the last

48 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

mentioned place. He was not to stay for any length of time on the French Riviera, but a flying visit there was permitted him, and it was hoped that his presence on French soil would not give rise to any unpleasantness. The Prince, who was accompanied by an old friend of his father, General von Lyncker, duly paid his respects to the aged Grand Duke Michael, and then called upon his cousins, among others upon the Grand Duchess Anastasia, who received him very graciously, but without the least idea that a marriage could eventually be arranged between him and her dearly-beloved daughter.

The young man was, of course, invited to the ball which was to be given in honour of the coming out of the Princess Cecile, and it was there he saw her for the first time. Her grace, amiability, and pretty face made a deep impression on the Prince, who immediately forgot all about his previous love affair, and upon his return to Bordighera wrote the Kaiser that he had met the only woman he wished to marry, and that if he was not allowed to do so he would remain single all his life. The thought that he could be refused by the young lady who had thus caught his fancy never occurred to him, and yet this is precisely what happened.

CHAPTER V

A FAIRY PRINCE

POOR Princess Cecile! In early childhood her old English nurse had often talked to her about a fairy Prince who was one day to appear and carry her away to his magnificent castle, where she was to live with him in great splendour and entire happiness. Unfortunately, fairy Princes do not run about the world, or, if they do, they are generally not members of Royal Houses, but simple commoners who do not care for Princesses, and rather look upon them with distrust. The charming little daughter of the Grand Duchess Anastasia was fated to realise this fact, because, though she did think that a fairy Prince had discovered her, she was not to see him come and claim her hand, but on the contrary was to be given away to a being with whom she was to find existence worse than a nightmare, and at whose hands she was to experience brutalities such as women in her class are seldom, if ever, subjected to. The handsome young

50 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

man who had been so attracted by her loveliness soon wearied of her, and then ill treated her, and finally she had to claim the protection of the law to free herself from him; but this is anticipating the future, so I had better go on with my story.

The Crown Prince did not wait for a reply from his father before trying to win the heart of the Princess Cecile. For one thing he did not think for one moment that the Emperor could raise any objection to his matrimonial plans, considering the irreproachable birth of the girl who had caught his fancy, and her sympathetic personality. He therefore imagined that it would be sufficient for him to ask her to marry him, to be accepted with enthusiasm. Great was his surprise, therefore, to find that such was not at all the case. Cecile replied when he proposed to her that she did not wish to marry so young, and that, besides, she had no voice in the matter, so he had therefore better talk with the Grand Duchess. Frederick William was intensely mortified, but nevertheless was compelled to follow this advice, and accordingly sought the presence of Anastasia Michaylowna, and told her that he had fallen in love with her daughter and meant to make her his wife.

Anastasia Michaylowna was extremely surprised, but her anger exceeded her astonishment. She knew very well that personally she was intensely distasteful to the Kaiser, therefore he would most assuredly object to the marriage, and it hurt her pride to think that the Princess Cecile might not be considered good enough to wear, some day, the united crowns of Germany and Prussia. Besides, she had not heard anything good concerning this unexpected suitor who had suddenly appeared on the horizon of the life of her child, whom she thought far too young to marry. On the other hand, it was a dazzling prospect from a worldly point of view which opened itself before the Princess, and she did not quite know whether or not she had the right to discourage the young man who (she was but too well aware) was at that moment the greatest prize in the matrimonial market of Europe. She therefore replied with some banal acknowledgment of the honour conferred upon her and her family, but declared at the same time that she could not by any means authorise the Prince to pay his addresses to Cecile until he had secured the consent of his parents, and she allowed him to understand that this would not be, perhaps, as easy

52 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

as he imagined. The young man would not listen. He was in love, or imagined that he was, and he was not used to being thwarted. When he left the Grand Duchess he immediately sought the Princess Cecile and once more renewed his entreaties to her to accept him at once, without waiting for the decision of the Kaiser. But the girl was not going to allow herself to be persuaded into taking a step which was far from appealing to her heart or fancy, so she deliberately refused the offer of the Crown Prince, simply telling him that she did not know him well enough to marry him and advising him not to think about her any more. Had she wished to add to Frederick William's infatuation for her she could not have acted more cleverly. Excited by her refusal he became quite angry, and at last swore that come what may he meant to win her whether she liked it or not. The next day he left for Berlin, but on his way there stopped for a few hours in Schwerin and laid his intentions before the Regent, asking the latter to interfere on his behalf with the Dowager Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg and to secure her consent to his marriage with her daughter.

It goes without saying that the Regent was more

than pleasantly surprised by this unexpected announcement. The idea of his niece becoming in time a German Empress could not but flatter him, and he replied that he would do all in his power to further the cause of the Prince. He advised him, however, to speak to the Kaiser before resuming his courtship of the Princess Cecile, feeling, perhaps, uneasy in his mind as to the attitude of William II in regard to this marriage, against which, he knew but too well, objections might be raised, owing to the unpopularity of the mother of the bride-elect.

In the meanwhile, whilst Frederick William was trying to secure for himself this bride, Cecile herself had quite forgotten about him and had resumed her former life in Cannes, riding, driving, playing tennis, and occasionally dancing at some small party. It was at one of these dances that she met a man who was to make a lasting impression upon her youthful mind, and whom she was never to forget, though she was to see him again only after long years, and under the most dramatic circumstances.

He was an American who had come to Cannes for the winter season, attracted by the vicinity of Monte Carlo, where he was reported to have been

54 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

seen playing for large stakes. He was a friend of some English people with whom the Grand Duchess Anastasia was very intimate, and he had been duly presented to her and to the Princess Cecile, with whom he had danced several times. The girl had attracted him, and when he heard (for people hear everything in places like Cannes, where gossip is flourishing) that the Crown Prince of Germany had fallen in love with her, he had felt a queer sensation in the region of his own heart, and had caught himself regretting that he could not step in and snatch this prize from her detestable suitor. He knew something of the life and character of Frederick William, and he thought that he could foresee what kind of fate awaited the sweet Princess who, he feared, would be given up without a struggle, probably, indeed, with alacrity and joy, into the keeping of the selfish youth who had never been known to show kindness to any creature on earth, whether dumb or human.

One evening when he had danced a quadrille with Cecile, she asked him to lead her to the dining-room, where she wished to get something cold to drink. She said that she was tired, and when she had sipped the lemonade which he brought her, she

expressed the desire to go into the conservatory which opened out of the ballroom, and to sit there for a few minutes. He obeyed her, and after having seen her settled in an armchair, he stood before her, contemplating her with eyes which must have expressed more emotion than he thought, because she suddenly asked him why he looked at her with such a strange anxiety.

"I don't think that I ought to tell you why, Princess," replied the young man, "and yet I will do so; I was looking at you, and thinking what would be your future, and whether you would not be sacrificed for state reasons, and induced to marry a man utterly unworthy of you."

"You mean the German Crown Prince," asked Cecile.

"Yes, I mean the German Crown Prince," answered her companion. "Believe me, Princess, there can be no happiness for you in a marriage with him."

"But there is no question of such a marriage," she said hastily. "I assure you that there is no question of it. I am far too young and, besides . . ."

"Besides," he asked with anxiety.

56 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

"Besides, I do not love him, and I do not think that I can marry a man I do not love."

"But you may get to love him in time," insisted the American. "Girls can do a great deal under the pressure of their families, and it must be acknowledged that he is an attractive young man. He might in time succeed in winning your heart, but beware, beware of him, Princess. Your life with him would be one long misery."

"And yet I suppose that I shall have to marry some day," wearily said Cecile.

"I suppose so," repeated the young man in a dry tone of voice, "and the misfortune of women in your position, Princess, is that they can neither follow the instincts of their own hearts nor allow men other than their equals in rank to pay their addresses to them. You live in an atmosphere of prejudice against which it is next to impossible to fight. But I would warn you not to rush headlong into a marriage which may mean the misfortune of your whole existence. Forgive me for having thus spoken to you. I shall not do it again." He took her hand and, raising it to his lips, kissed it with respect and reverence.

"Let me lead you back to the ballroom," he

said. "It is not wise that we should be seen talking here too long. Besides, I am leaving Cannes to-morrow and must start early. Once more forgive me."

"Are you really going away?" asked the Princess. "Why so soon? I thought you were going to stay in Cannes for another month or so."

"There are such things as letters that call you home unexpectedly," he replied, and there was a ring of bitterness in his voice. "Men are not always strong enough to resist temptation. I must now say good-bye to you, Princess. May I hope that you will remember me sometimes, and also that in case you should ever want a friend, you will not hesitate to call upon me? This address will always find me," and he slipped a small piece of paper into her hand. Then, turning upon his heels, he was gone before she could say one word in reply to his farewell.

CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM, CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY

THE young man who had so quickly fallen in love with pretty Princess Cecile of Mecklenburg was up to that time practically unknown. All that the general public had heard about him was that he had been educated extremely strictly and in an entirely military manner, also that he had never been a favourite with his father, who much preferred his second son, Prince Eitel Fritz. The Empress, on the other hand, had always been partial to this eldest boy of hers, and had continually stood between him and the Kaiser, whenever friction had occurred. The Crown Prince had had a tutor whom he had always disliked, and a few companions of his own age, with whom he had never been able to get on. He was supposed to be shy and timid, and yet those who knew him well declared that his character was a brutal one which might easily develop into violence should the opportunity present itself.



THE CROWN PRINCE
AT THE TIME OF HIS MARRIAGE

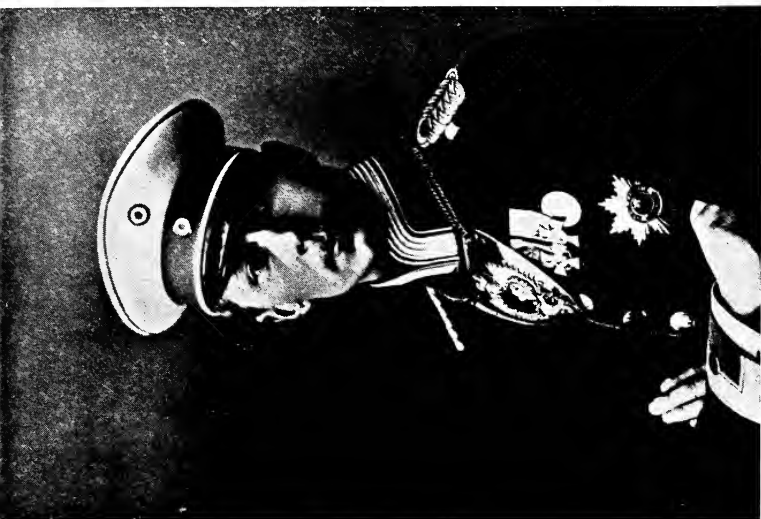


Photo by Paul Thompson.
FREDERICK WILLIAM
EX-CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY



Very secretive on some occasions and extremely exuberant on others, he presented a curious mixture of his father's versatility and his mother's reticence. In society he was pleasant and amiable when he liked, and disagreeable and sarcastic when it suited his purposes. For women he had been partial ever since his school days, and, though he was but twenty-one when he met for the first time the young girl who was to become his wife, he had already had several love affairs. Inordinately ambitious and of an extraordinary vanity, he did not admit that he could be thwarted in anything he wished to do, and the only being of whom he stood in awe was the Emperor, who had treated him since his birth with great coldness and severity. At the same time he understood perfectly well his father's character, and knew better than any other member of the Hohenzollern family how to handle him whenever he wished to get anything out of him. When he returned from Cannes to Berlin, therefore, he did not let the grass grow under his feet, but sought the Kaiser immediately and informed him that he had at last made up his mind to carry out his father's wishes and to marry a woman who was his equal in birth and rank.

60 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

At first William II was quite gratified by the announcement. He had always been afraid that his heir would become entangled in some intrigue which would prevent him from fulfilling that part of the programme which was traditional in the Hohenzollern family, i. e., that a future Sovereign should bring home as early as possible a suitable bride. He expressed his satisfaction, and began suggesting to him the names of the various Princesses on whom his choice might fall. His surprise was great when Frederick William replied that he had already met the one he wished to wed, namely, the Duchess Cecile of Mecklenburg.

The Kaiser was quite stupefied. The thought of such an alliance had never entered his mind; not that he did not deem it suitable in every way, but because he so much disliked the Grand Duchess Anastasia that the thought of seeing her daughter become a member of his family circle was distinctly disagreeable to him. He had always avoided the Grand Duchess whenever possible. He hated her character and considered her a dangerous person on account of the levity of her conduct and her Russian proclivities. If her daughter should become the Crown Princess of Prussia he would be

compelled to receive her in his house and to treat her with respect and consideration. This was as unpleasant as possible, and he told his heir that for many reasons, chief of which was the youth of the Princess, he would not give his consent to such a marriage, at least not for the present.

But to his astonishment the Crown Prince for once showed resistance to his father's commands and declared that he would never marry if not allowed to take for his wife the young Princess who had attracted him so much. And he added that he had already mentioned his intentions on the subject to the Regent of Mecklenburg and that therefore the latter would take it as a personal slight and offence if the Emperor did not endorse the decision of his son and heir.

The Kaiser was furious. He had been put in a false position and he knew it. Then he bethought himself that with the known fickleness of the Crown Prince, it was just possible that the latter might tire of his intended wife before the day fixed for their wedding, provided that day was put off as long as possible. He also hoped that with the help of a little diplomacy he might induce the widowed Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg to refuse her con-

62 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

sent to her daughter's nuptials. So he adopted what the French call "*bonne mine à mauvais jeu*" and replied that though for reasons of his own the idea of such a marriage was distasteful to him, yet he could not refuse his consent to it; that there were certain conditions, however, connected with the permission he was prepared to grant, one of which consisted in the delaying of the wedding ceremony for another year, during which time the young people would have opportunity to get better acquainted and know whether they were really suited to one another. The Crown Prince accepted these conditions and further surprised his father by telling him that though he had made up his mind to marry the Princess Cecile, he was not at all sure whether she would have him.

This made William II very angry. The idea that a young chit of a girl whose position in the world was far from being securely established (thanks to the strange conduct of her mother) could look askance at the prospect of one day becoming German Empress and Queen of Prussia seemed to him to be absolutely preposterous. He therefore told his son that he must have acted like the fool he had always held him to be if he had not suc-

ceeded in winning Cecile's heart, and that the only advice which he could give to him was to try to see her again and to settle immediately the question as to whether she was really such a little idiot as not to jump at the chance which was being offered her—a chance which she had had no right to expect would ever fall to her lot.

The Crown Prince did not need to be told to return to Cannes, and he made up his mind to start for the Riviera within the next few days. But, to his mortification, he read in the papers the very next morning that the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin had been ordered by her doctors to go to St. Moritz for the benefit of her health, and that she and her daughter had left Cannes with the intention of spending the summer months (it was already April) in travelling through Switzerland and Italy.

Frederick William started in pursuit of the two ladies and joined them at Vevey on the shores of Lake Geneva. There he began in earnest to lay siege to the affections of pretty Cecile. He could be charming when he liked, and for once he meant to show himself in his best colours. The indifference of the girl who had appealed so much to

64 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

his imagination only gave him a new stimulus in his undertaking to make her as much in love with him as he was with her, and he pushed things so far that at last the Grand Duchess Anastasia began to believe he was in earnest and to consider whether she would do the right thing if she refused this chance of a splendid establishment for her daughter. It was true that all she had heard concerning this suitor for the latter's hand had been anything but favourable. But then every young man must sow his wild oats, and, after all, the Prince might reform if blessed with a good and affectionate wife. The Princess herself became also interested in Frederick William. He used to send her flowers every day, mostly wild ones such as she liked, which he declared to her he had picked himself in the mountains whilst she was still asleep in the early morning, and on one special occasion he rode as far as Geneva from Vevey to bring her some particular book she had told him she had wished to read, but had not been able to find in the local shop. He carried her shawls and wraps, together with those of the Grand Duchess Anastasia, and followed the two ladies like a submissive little dog wherever they went. And then he tried to interest

Cecile in his existence and mode of life, explained to her different things concerning his position in Berlin and his relations with the Kaiser, and admitted that though he had often shown himself imprudent, it had been more out of idleness than anything else. What he required was a home of his own, with a beautiful and accomplished wife to enliven it. The Royal Palace of Berlin was not a home but a prison, out of which he would give anything to escape.

It was impossible for poor little inexperienced Cecile not to feel flattered by these confidences. It is true that sometimes misgivings used to arise in her mind, and the remembrance of the warning of her American friend haunted her now and then. But the people who surrounded her said it would be wicked and almost like flying in the face of Providence to refuse the chance of occupying the high position which was offered her. Her uncle, the Grand Duke Nicholas Michaylowitsch, her mother's favourite brother, who was considered the clever man of the Romanoff family, came to spend a few days in Vevey, and he also advised her to accept the offer of the Crown Prince, adding that as a future Empress she would be en-

66 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

abled to do a great deal of good and would also constitute a link between the Russian and the German dynasties. Her grandfather, the aged Grand Duke Michael, also wrote to her saying that she would commit an unpardonable mistake if she allowed prejudices to interfere between her and her chances of a magnificent marriage. Everything and everybody seemed to conspire against her. And, what was most important of all, she began herself to be attracted to Frederick William. Her vanity was flattered, and at seventeen one must be forgiven for having vanity. She began to notice all that the Prince did; whenever he absented himself for a day or two from Vevey she missed him, and when he returned owed to him that she had done so. In short, this courtship, or idyll, call it what you like, went on as other romances of the same kind go on, until the day when at last the Crown Prince put the direct question to Cecile—whether she would consent to become his wife, adding what he had already told his father, that if she refused him he would never marry another woman. The girl was won; and perhaps more easily than she ever thought possible. So a few days later the official newspapers in Berlin, as well as in Schwerin,



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS NICHOLAYEWITSCH OF RUSSIA
(UNCLE OF THE EX-CROWN PRINCESS)



announced that His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Germany and Prussia was betrothed with the permission of His Majesty the Emperor to Her Highness the Duchess Cecile of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. . . .

Weeks later the paper containing this announcement fell into the hands of a young man sitting on the verandah of a house on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. He read it over three or four times, then flung the sheet upon the floor with a gesture of impatience. "Bah, why do I care?" he muttered to himself. "She will be like the rest of them, and yet, and yet . . . I thought that with her it would have been different!"

CHAPTER VII

AT FLORENCE

THE Grand Duchess Anastasia Michaylowna was a very clever woman. When she had become reconciled to the idea of her daughter's marriage she made up her mind to do everything that lay in her power to hasten the event, and thus to thwart the secret desires of the Kaiser to drag matters as long as possible in the hope that the Crown Prince would grow tired of his future wife. The Grand Duchess did not mean to give him this chance; she played her cards admirably, ignoring the slights which from the first day of Princess Cecile's engagement were dealt her, and smiling sweetly at the many insulting messages she received. William II, when he found out that the hated marriage was about to become an accomplished fact, invited the Regent of Mecklenburg to pay him a visit in Berlin and there discussed with him the future of his son and intended daughter-in-law, and he informed the poor Regent that he expected him to acquaint

the Dowager Grand Duchess with the fact that he wished her to give up the idea of ever seeing the Princess Cecile otherwise than quite formally after the wedding. She would be allowed, of course, to assist at the ceremony, but would have to leave Berlin on the day following, and would be permitted to return to the German capital only on one single occasion, that of the christening of her first grandchild. The Emperor also expressed the wish that the Princess Cecile might be given an opportunity to see her fiancé somewhere without the presence of her mother. The best thing, he said, would be for her to come to Potsdam and remain there until the day of her marriage, under the protection of the Kaiserin, who would see that she was trained for the exigencies of her future position as the consort of the Crown Prince of Germany.

The Regent was quite aghast. He had always stood in awe of his brilliant sister-in-law, the charming but difficult-to-deal-with Anastasia; so he replied that though he understood the Kaiser's motives, he certainly would not take upon himself to suggest to the Grand Duchess any such proceeding. But it seems that the latter somehow got an inkling of the affair, because she wrote to William

70 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

II that though she did not mean to allow her daughter to go anywhere without her, yet she thought it might be advisable for her to see something more of her future husband; therefore, as her own health obliged her to undergo a cure in some sanatorium, she proposed that the Princess Cecile should repair to Florence, under the chaperonship of a Mecklenburg lady-in-waiting, and remain there for a few weeks, during which the Crown Prince could pay her a visit. As for sending her to Potsdam, she would not think of letting her make a visit of such importance without accompanying her, and therefore she begged the Empress to consent to its postponement until she was completely recovered, when she would consider it a pleasant and sacred duty to bring her child to Germany, and present her to her future mother-in-law.

This piece of diplomacy produced the desired effect. The Kaiserin replied that of course she would not dream of asking the Grand Duchess to forego her cure, however much she might desire to welcome her at Potsdam, and that she entirely agreed with the suggestion of letting the engaged pair meet in Italy and enjoy there a few weeks' vacation. The Crown Prince was then sent to Florence, where he

found the Princess Cecile already settled in a comfortable suite of rooms at the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne on the Lung Arno, and he himself took up his quarters at the Hotel de la Ville, in a street near-by.

The days which followed were perhaps the happiest in the whole life of the young girl whose story I am relating. The Crown Prince showed himself really a fairy Prince, loaded her with magnificent presents, and was the attentive and submissive lover in every respect. The engaged pair used to take long drives and rides in the beautiful neighbourhood of Florence, and made excursions to the different places of interest in the vicinity of the historic city. Frederick William exerted himself to make a favourable impression on his beautiful fiancée, and tried to paint in a rosy light the existence which she was so soon to enter upon. They made many plans together, and decided that they would live entirely for one another, and try to keep as much as possible aloof from the many intrigues of the Imperial Court. But when the Princess expressed her intention of spending part of the year with her mother in Cannes, the Prince objected, and told her that much as he would have

72 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

liked to grant her request, he feared that the Kaiser would refuse it, because it was *de rigueur*, since the war of 1870, for the Prussian Royal family to make no lengthy stay in France. This was the first shadow to cross the bright heaven of Cecile's bliss. The next one was still darker and arose on the following occasion:

The lovers had gone on an excursion to Fiesole. It was a beautiful spring day and they sat on the steps of the old church of Fiesole, looking at the splendid landscape stretched out before their eyes, with the spires of the many churches and domes of Florence glistening in the sun in the distance. A little mongrel dog came crawling towards the Princess Cecile, evidently attracted by her winning countenance and manners. She bent down to caress it, when the Prince, furious at seeing her touch the dirty animal, gave him a kick which sent him reeling ten or twelve paces off, whining pitifully.

"How could you? How could you do such a brutal thing?" exclaimed Cecile. "What has the poor little beast done to you?"

She ran and caught the dog up in her arms and began to pet and console it as best she could.

"Drop the mongrel. Drop him instantly,"

called the Crown Prince. "I won't have you touch every filthy animal that comes up to you. Drop him, I tell you!" And he was about to snatch the dog from the Princess's arms, when the animal, evidently feeling himself protected, snarled furiously at his aggressor.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," cried Cecile, "and, what is more, I am going to buy him, if I can find his owner, and to take him home with me."

"I will never allow you to do so," cried the Prince, white with rage.

"You have not the right to forbid me anything yet," replied his fiancée, furious in her turn. And she walked away, leaving him standing on the steps of the old church, with the dog still nestling in her arms. On her way to the carriage, which was awaiting her and the Prince, she met an old peasant who, on seeing the dog, exclaimed, "Madre di Dio, here is Fido. What has happened to him?"

"Nothing has happened," said Cecile. "He has only been frightened, but he is a nice and dear little dog. Won't you sell him to me?" and taking out her purse she emptied its contents into the hand of the old woman who, only too glad of such a piece of unexpected good luck, began profusely blessing

74 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

the Princess with all the exuberance of language common to the Italians.

The Crown Prince could not speak Italian, which Cecile knew quite well, and consequently did not understand the conversation. He remained sulking where his fiancée had left him, and did not make the slightest effort to join her. She seemed to enjoy his discomfiture, merely remarking:

“I know that you are fond of walking; perhaps you would prefer returning to Florence alone. I shall therefore take the carriage and leave you here.” And coolly taking her seat in the victoria, which had been standing near by with the lady-in-waiting seated in it, and with the dog on her knees, she had herself driven back to the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne. This scene led almost to the rupture of the engagement of the Princess with the Crown Prince. It took a long time for Frederick William to forget how he had been thwarted, and for a few hours he hated the girl who had publicly humiliated and defied him. He did not come near her that day, but wrote her a note saying that he supposed she did not wish to see him again, but that nevertheless he would hold himself at her disposal in case she desired to talk things over with

him and discuss the disagreeable incident which had taken place at Fiesole. By that time Cecile's anger had cooled down and she had begun to feel frightened at the consequences of this quarrel, the first one she had had with the Prince, so she replied quite graciously that she felt sorry for her impatience, but that she could not bear to see an animal ill-treated, and ended her letter with the request that her fiancé would come to see her as soon as possible, so as to make it up, as she desired a reconciliation as much as he did. Of course he appeared, and of course the young people made it up. But this incident, insignificant as it was, was to rankle in the heart of the girl who for the first time in her life had been brought face to face with the brutality of a man incapable of restraining himself. Again she remembered the warning of her American friend, and once more misgivings as to whether she had been wise in accepting the offer of marriage of the future German Emperor crossed her mind. It was however too late for her to withdraw without an open scandal, and so the subject was not reopened. The Crown Prince brought her a lovely bracelet the next morning, and they sealed their reconciliation with a kiss. But (and this was characteristic

76 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of Cecile) the unfortunate dog that had been the cause of this storm in a tea-cup remained with the Princess, who, when she married, brought him with her to Berlin, much to the disgust of the Crown Prince. However, he did not like to cross her again on the subject, and left her in undisturbed possession of the animal that had nearly brought about the rupture of their engagement.

This incident cast a shadow on the last days of the Princess Cecile's sojourn at Florence, and somehow the old affectionate and mutually admiring relations which had existed between her and the Crown Prince underwent a change. Two strong characters had crossed swords, and had learned that they might do it many more times in the future which awaited them, and which they had imagined would be for them a perpetual holiday.

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE

OF course the Grand Duchess Anastasia was very much distressed when she heard the story of her daughter's first quarrel with the Crown Prince. She would have liked very much to hurry the marriage, but the Kaiser had settled it was to take place in the course of the following June, so she had still eleven months to wait, during which many things could occur which she would not care in the least to have happen. But she was a wise woman and she kept her counsel, only making it a point to prevent the Princess seeing too much of her future husband until the day when she should be given up to his care. She invented different pretexts in order to accomplish this, among others the excuse of having to remain a long time in Paris for the purchase of the inevitable trousseau which she intended should be a most elaborate affair, far handsomer than that of the Crown Princess of Denmark. Indeed, apart from the money which the Grand Du-

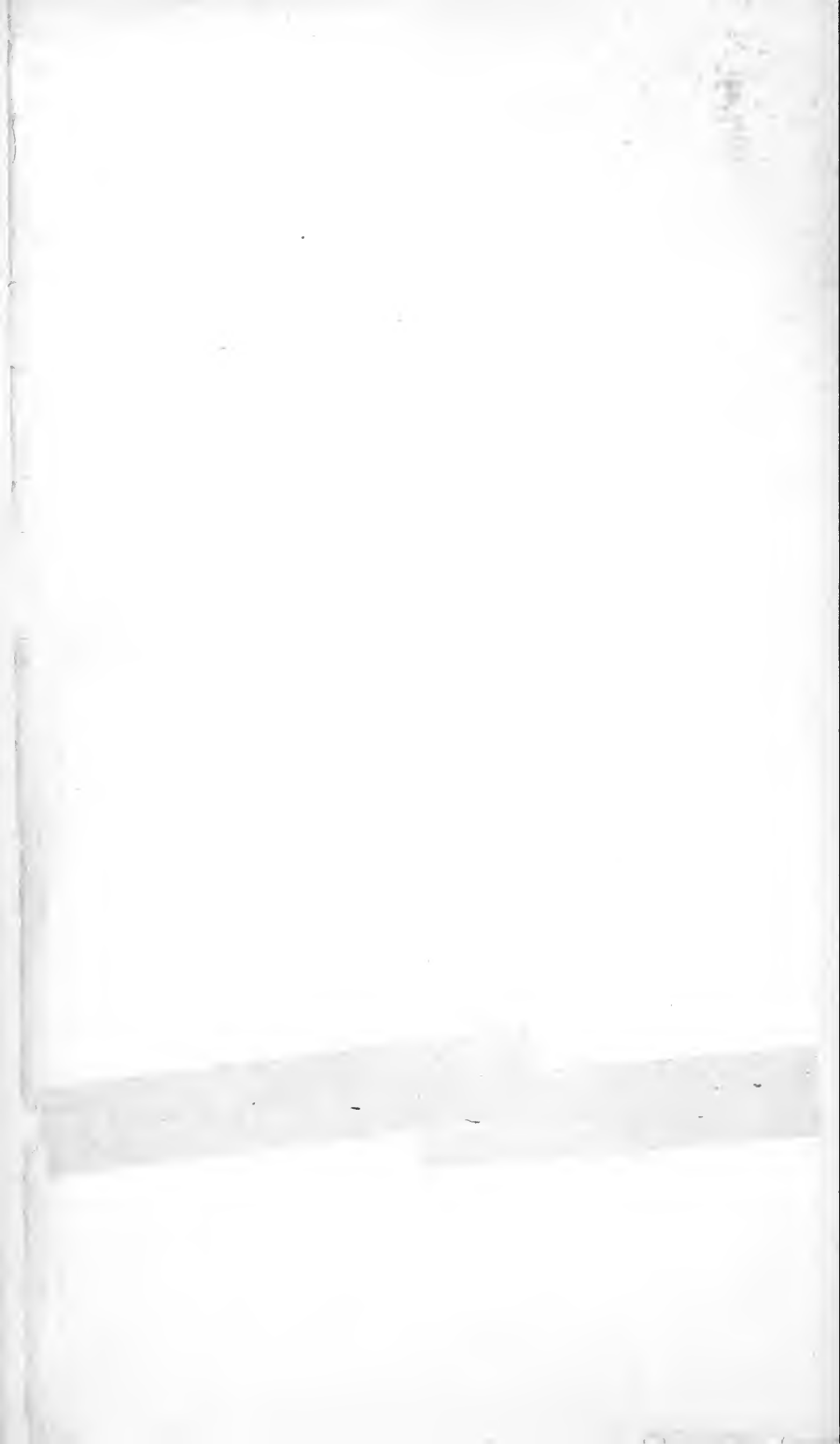
78 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

cal House of Mecklenburg furnished for the purpose, Anastasia spent a large sum out of her private means to buy for Cecile the most wonderful gowns and lingerie a Royal Princess had ever seen. But this question of the trousseau of the future Crown Princess of Germany gave rise to much heartburning, and brought about terrible discussions between her mother and her prospective parents-in-law. The Kaiser wished it to be made in Berlin, but the Grand Duchess absolutely refused to order it in Germany, remarking that she was free to spend her own money where she liked, and that she did not mean her child to have hideous German garments instead of the lovely Parisian confections she meant to give her. Nothing could change her decision, and when she was told that what she was doing was entirely against Prussian etiquette, she retorted that if the Emperor wished the Princess to have Berlin clothes, he could buy them for her himself, but that she would certainly do nothing of the kind. William II had never been generous, and he did not care to waste his own resources in the purchase of things which his instinct told him would not be appreciated by the person to whom they were offered. So, to the disgust of the Berlin



Photo by Paul Thompson.

EX-CROWN PRINCESS CECILE



tradesmen who had hoped to reap a large benefit out of the marriage of the Crown Prince, they were not asked to contribute to the trousseau of his bride, who arrived in the Prussian capital with a wardrobe which eclipsed in elegance and magnificence everything that had ever been seen there before.

One thing in which the Prussian Royal family showed itself generous was in the collection of gifts which they presented to Cecile. The Kaiserin gave her the splendid parure of rubies and diamonds which she had received from her own mother-in-law, the late Empress Frederick, on the occasion of her own marriage, whilst the Kaiser, apart from the diamond tiara which etiquette obliges the Sovereign to give to every Hohenzollern bride, added to this present some strings of wonderful pearls, and a magnificent diamond and emerald parure. The Prince and Princess Frederick Leopold gave Cecile a diamond *Rivière* and pearl earrings, whilst the gifts which were sent to her from her Russian relatives surpassed in beauty everything that had ever been seen in Berlin outside the Prussian Crown jewels. As for the Crown Prince, he remembered that his bride's favourite colour was blue, and he offered her some sapphires and turquoises of inestim-

80 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

able value. A rare collection of laces and antique fans was also a part of her wedding presents, and the Grand Duchess Anastasia sacrificed some of her own ornaments in favour of her daughter. The trousseau itself comprised six dozens of underclothes of the finest nainsook and batiste, all trimmed with real Valenciennes and Mechlin lace, innumerable negligés and dainty petticoats and matinées, furs of every kind and description, and no less than fifty gowns, all made at the leading dressmaking establishments of Paris and London. It was truly a trousseau worthy of a King's daughter, and even those who criticised the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg for having ordered it in Paris had to acknowledge that nothing more wonderful had yet been seen in Berlin.

The wedding took place on the sixth day of June of the year 1905, and two days before it was solemnised the youthful bride made her formal entry into Berlin, seated by the side of the Kaiserin in the great golden State coach of the Prussian Kings, which was only taken out on such occasions. The Mayor of the capital greeted her at its gates, and on the threshold of the old Castle the Kaiser himself, with the Crown Prince, received her solemnly, and

conducted her to the apartments which had been prepared for her and for her mother, which she was to occupy until her marriage. A State performance at the Opera closed the day, when enthusiastic acclamations welcomed the Princess on her first public appearance in her new country. She looked radiantly beautiful and happy, whilst her fiancé also seemed in the seventh Heaven of delight, and kept following all her movements with eyes which showed as plainly and distinctly as possible that he was deeply in love with her, and anxiously awaiting the day when he would be able at last to call her his own for ever. On the wedding day, or rather evening, because it was solemnised at six o'clock in the afternoon, the Princess Cecile, after having put on her bridal dress, was escorted by the ladies of her new household to a room in the Castle where the Kaiserin awaited her, surrounded by all her Court. The diamond crown which is worn by all the Princesses of Prussia on their marriage day was brought to her, and it was Augusta Victoria herself who put it on the head of the bride, where it was fastened with large diamond hairpins. It was a very handsome crown made out of magnificent stones and it suited Cecile perfectly, her tall

82 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

and slight figure carrying it off with wonderful dignity. Her gown was made out of silver cloth, all embroidered with orange blossoms and myrtle, also in silver, and the train was six yards in length. The front of the skirt was entirely draped with wonderful old Alençon point, and the same kind of lace composed the veil, which fell down her back from under the crown. When her toilet was completed, the young Princess surprised everybody by going up to her mother and kneeling down before her to ask her blessing. Anastasia Michaylowna, deeply moved, raised her daughter from her knees and tenderly kissed her, both feeling perhaps that this was the last time they would be allowed to exchange such a long embrace.

Then Cecile walked out of the room escorted by the Kaiserin, who, at the door of the State apartments, stepped aside to allow the Crown Prince to take her place, and it was led by him that the Princess made her entry into the ancient chapel of the old Castle of Berlin, which had seen so many Royal marriages solemnised within its grey walls.

The etiquette which presides at the weddings of the members of the Hohenzollern family is a very complicated one. After the religious ceremony has

been performed, the bride and bridegroom take their place under a dais beside the Emperor and Empress, and the invited guests file past them, curtseying deeply as they do so. After this part of the pageant is over a splendid supper is served at which the health of the newly married pair is drunk, and then begins what is called the Fackel Tanz. Preceded by the principal Court officials, and by all the members of the Cabinet, who carry large wax torches, the bride and bridegroom march solemnly round the big ballroom followed by every member of the Royal family present, and every invited guest of Royal or Imperial rank. When there are many guests this part of the ceremony lasts sometimes more than an hour. It is picturesque in the extreme, inasmuch as the bride, after and before she makes every turn, curtseys deeply to the Emperor as well as to her successive partners, the bridegroom doing the same before the Empress and every Royal lady he leads in this polonaise (it can hardly be called anything else) which gives ample opportunity to the invited guests to take a careful review of the beautiful costumes and jewels which as a rule are only brought to light on occasions of this kind.

84 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

This strange dance is followed by something which is stranger still, i. e., the giving to the assistants pieces of sky-blue ribbon with the initials of the bride and bridegroom embroidered thereon with gold, which are supposed to be part of the bride's garter. This is the last act of a ceremony that generally lasts from five to six hours; after it is over the newly married couple are at last allowed to retire to their own apartments.

The day following the wedding a religious service of thanksgiving takes place in the same chapel in which it was celebrated, after which a State Ball is given, which brings to a close festivities that are more amusing to the guests than to those in whose honour they are given.

The new Crown Princess was to take up her residence in Potsdam with her husband, who had been recently promoted to a captaincy in the first regiment of Foot Guards. At first it was intended that they should repair there immediately after the marriage ceremony, but Cecile did not wish to leave Berlin until after the departure of her mother, which had been fixed for the following evening. The Grand Duchess Anastasia had faithfully performed her part of the tacit bargain she had made,

and she had herself declared that she would leave for her villa in Doberan in Mecklenburg as soon as she had seen her child settled in her new residence. But the Kaiser did not want her to do this, and objected to her going to Potsdam, even for a few hours' visit. So after many discussions, which at one time threatened to assume a most bitter character, the Grand Duchess agreed to leave, and she bade good-bye to her daughter with a far heavier heart than she had imagined possible.

Poor little Cecile clung to her mother and wept copious tears when she had to part from her. They were both realising all that their separation meant and implied, and people who were standing near them heard the new Crown Princess murmur in Anastasia Michaylowna's ear: "Oh, Mama, Mama, how could I do it, how could I do it?" The Grand Duchess answered only with sobs, and so at last they parted, and another existence, very different from the one she had led before, began for the young wife of Frederick William, Crown Prince of Germany and Prussia.

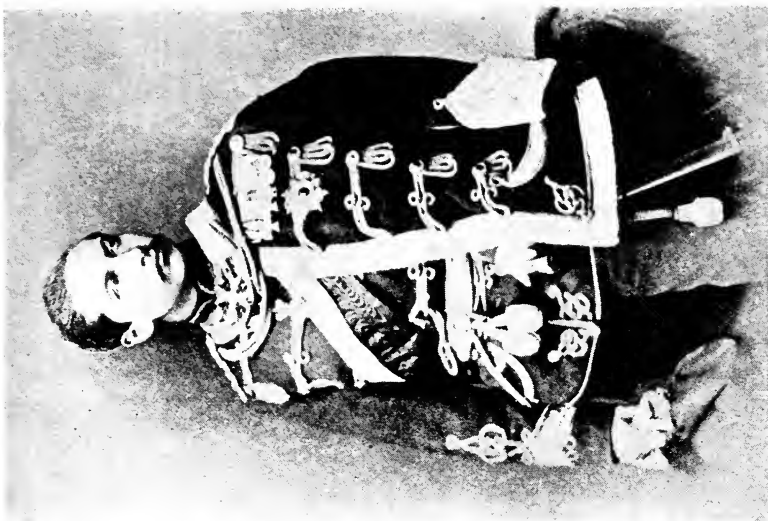
CHAPTER IX

THE SURROUNDINGS AND COURT OF THE NEW CROWN PRINCESS

CECILE of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was only eighteen years old when she became the bride of the heir to the German Imperial Throne. She had been brought up in an atmosphere of refinement and liberty that was very different from the stiff etiquette which prevailed at the Prussian Court. Her mother-in-law, the Kaiserin, though an excellent, kindly and extremely good and indulgent woman, was so insignificant and so absorbed in her housewifely duties that she could hardly become a friend for the girl who, after having enjoyed the happiness of a singularly pleasant family life, found herself transplanted quite suddenly among people who held absolutely different theories from those in which she had been educated, and who were inclined to criticise her, and to try to bring her down to their own level. The Crown Prince, as I have already related, had been ardently in love with her,



THE KAISERIN IN 1881



THE KAISER IN 1883



but his nature was far too coarse to understand that a wife could not be treated in the same way as a mistress, and he made no allowances for the natural shyness of the young girl whom he had married against the wishes of his parents, and more from a feeling of defiance than from any other motive. Cecile suffered cruelly during the first weeks which followed upon that wedding day that had passed off so triumphantly for her, and curious though this may sound, yet it is a fact that at this early stage of her existence as the Crown Princess of Germany and Prussia, she found only one friend, and that was the last person one would have thought of—the Kaiser. William II had been conquered by the sweetness and the grace of his new daughter-in-law, who had won his heart from the very first day that he had seen her, so that after having opposed her marriage with his son, he grew to care for her far more than for any other member of his family, and later on was on more than one occasion to take her part against the Crown Prince, when the latter gave way to those fits of brutality which were to cause his wife so much unhappiness. Cecile was a clever woman, moreover, and her father-in-law discovered very soon that he could discuss with her

88 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

many serious subjects about which it was impossible for him to talk to his own wife. She was witty also, had a keen sense of humour, and knew how to amuse the Emperor and to bring a smile to his lips when others failed to do so. But whilst she succeeded in winning the heart of William II, she also discovered that the fact of her having done so exasperated the Crown Prince, who, instead of rejoicing that his consort had so quickly made herself at home in her new family and had contrived to do away with the prejudices which the Kaiser had entertained in regard to her, became jealous of her, and reproached her with intriguing against him. He had wearied of her almost immediately after their marriage, and his sneaky, underhand character had seen a danger to himself in the popularity which the Princess Cecile was acquiring so rapidly.

He did not ill-treat her (in the usual sense of that word) during the first year or two, but he sneered at her, neglected her, and whenever she tried to get him to give her advice or to come to her help with his own experience, he refused to do so, and replied by some caustic remark to the effect that since she was so very clever she did not require any guidance

from him. The Crown Prince's nature was not one which could submit to the exigencies of married life, and it was a matter of perfect indifference to him whether his wife did or did not like him to absent himself for hours, and sometimes for days, from home, without telling her where he was going, or what he had been doing. He did not care in the very least for her feelings, and of course he did not notice that the love which the Princess had undoubtedly borne him was fast dying out, and that in its place something very akin to hatred was slowly rising and embittering the whole existence of the lovely girl whose destiny he had taken upon himself to control. A son was born to the young couple one year after their marriage, and its coming into the world revealed to Cecile, more than anything that had gone before, the small part which she held in her husband's life. The Prince had been invited for a few days' shooting by one of his particular friends, and though the Princess was already suffering and ill, he refused to abandon the pleasure of his projected excursion, and left Potsdam a few hours before his first-born son made his appearance in the world. The Kaiser was also away, on his annual trip to the Norwegian Fjords; the Grand

90 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Duchess of Mecklenburg had not been allowed to come to Berlin and be with her daughter in the critical hour of her life, and with the exception of the Kaiserin there was no one near Cecile to encourage and soothe her during her trial. She had to suffer alone, and alone to brace herself up for all the horrors of a future which she knew by that time was bound to be very different from what she had looked forward to during the months when the enamoured Crown Prince had poured vows of eternal fidelity into her ears. When she arose from her bed and resumed the daily routine of her former existence it was with feelings vastly different from those that had ruled her conduct before, because she had made up her mind not to allow herself to be overpowered by the freaks of an unhappy destiny, but to try, on the contrary, to get the best out of life and the situation in which she found herself.

The Crown Princess had with her, as Mistress of her Household, a woman of great intelligence and considerable heart, Madame Rose von Thiele Winkler, who had been one of the most popular women in Berlin society at the time when she had filled the position of lady-in-waiting to the old Princess

Charles of Prussia. She would certainly have been of great help and use to Cecile if the latter had only consented to take her into her confidence and to treat her as a friend. Unfortunately, the two ladies were not sympathetic to each other, and their wills seemed to clash on every occasion, so instead of trust and friendship, animosity prevailed between them. The Crown Princess could not divest herself of the idea that Frau von Thiele Winkler was nothing more nor less than a spy, who had been ordered to watch over all her actions and report upon them to the Kaiser and the Kaiserin, and she accordingly treated her with a cold disdain which must have painfully affected the lady in question, who nevertheless remained faithful to the Crown Princess, and tried hard, though most of the time in vain, to win the heart of her young and capricious mistress. It is probable that if the Princess had only listened to this wise Mentor she would have avoided many of the pitfalls into which she was to fall in after years, but unfortunately she would not look at things or at people impartially or reasonably, and in consequence found herself completely isolated and almost without one single

92 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

friend capable of pleading her cause before the Kaiser when the hour of her great trial came.

The indifference displayed by the Crown Prince in regard to his wife at the time of the birth of their first-born son hardened the heart of Cecile and in a certain sense made her reckless. She got her doctor to order her to St. Moritz for her health, and there contrived to meet her mother, in whom she hoped to find the adviser that she was shrewd enough to realise she needed. But alas, alas, the Kaiser heard of the meeting and immediately telegraphed to his daughter-in-law to return to Berlin without delay. The Crown Princess put the telegram into the waste paper basket and took no heed of it, but for once the Crown Prince sided with his father, and to his wife's intense stupefaction he appeared one morning in St. Moritz to fetch her back, as he declared. Stormy scenes took place between husband and wife, and for the first time Cecile found her husband's hand fall heavily upon her shoulder. She screamed so loudly that the whole hotel in which they were staying became alarmed, and guests as well as servants rushed towards the apartments occupied by the Royal couple to see what was taking place. The Grand Duchess

Anastasia also hastened to her daughter's room, where she found the latter stretched upon the floor in an agony of weeping, whilst the Crown Prince, sullen and morose, was standing beside her, apparently unconscious of her distress.

The Grand Duchess soon learned the details of the scene which had taken place, and in her indignation she seized her son-in-law by the shoulders and simply put him out of the room; then she sat down and wrote to William II, relating what had taken place, and asking him whether he could not protect his daughter-in-law against the brutalities of her husband. The Kaiser was shocked beyond words at this communication. With all his faults he had always treated women with respect and consideration, and it was therefore exceedingly painful for him to find that his son had so far forgotten himself as to raise his hand against his consort. The Crown Prince was immediately recalled to Berlin, whilst the Princess Cecile was authorised to remain with her mother in Switzerland. But this intervention did not lead to much, because she had, after all, to return to her own home and to her little boy, who during her absence had remained with the Kaiserin. When she reached Potsdam she dis-

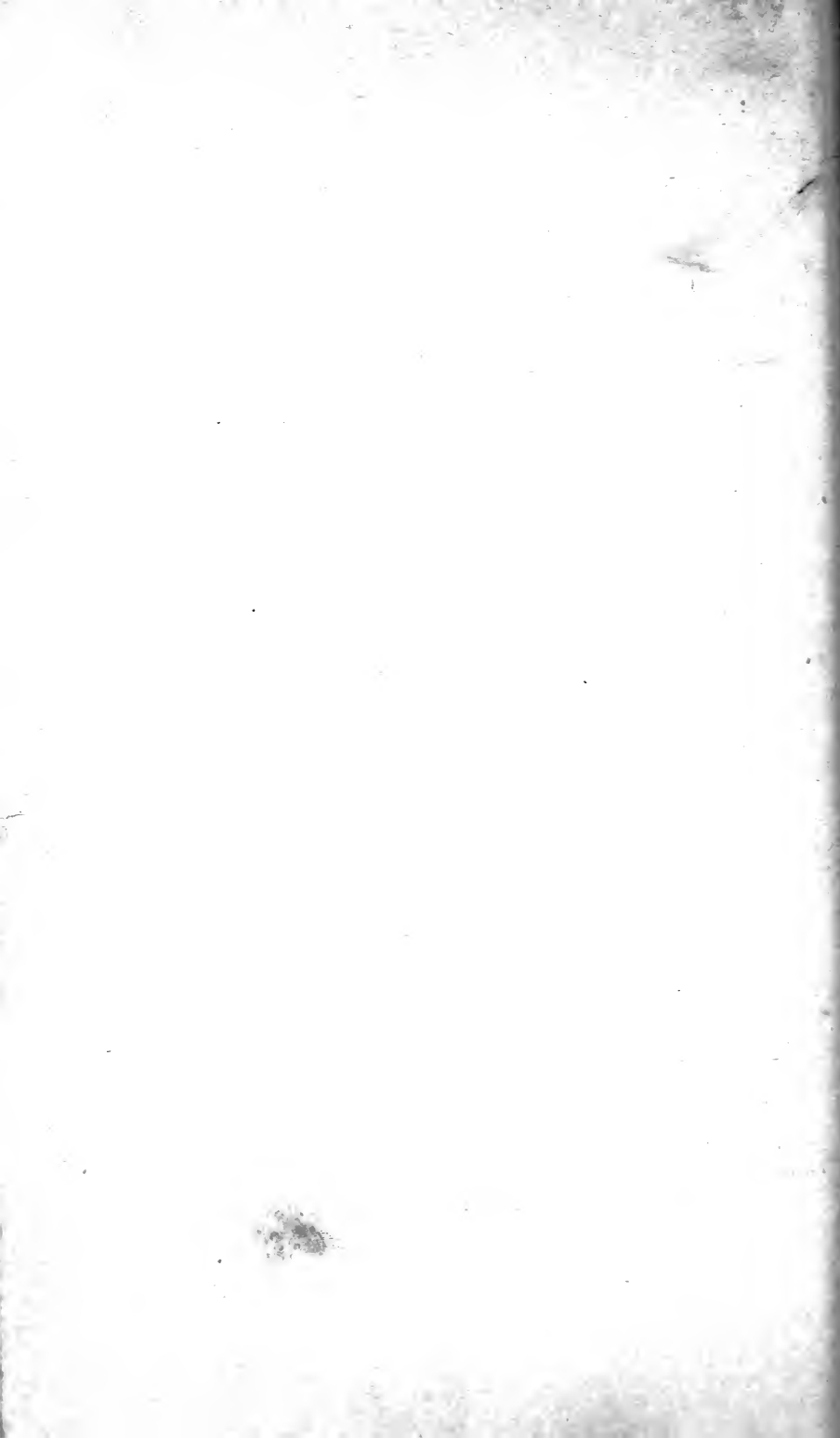
94 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

covered that her husband was more embittered against her than he had ever been before, and that he accused her of having tried to turn the Emperor against him by relating facts which he declared were not true. It was useless for poor Cecile to protest that she had never done so, and that she would have preferred to die rather than reveal to her father-in-law the brutalities to which she had been subjected. The Crown Prince would not accept her denials, declaring that he knew exactly how much she was to blame for the strained relations which already existed between him and William II. His rage against the unfortunate Princess attained such proportions that he confided to all his friends and even to the man in the street all the grievances, real or supposed, which he considered that he had against his wife, and he seized every opportunity to represent her to the general public as a selfish woman who cared for nothing but her personal comforts and who had married him simply out of ambition, and because by doing so she was securing for herself in the future the great position of Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia.



Photo by Paul Thompson.

THE EX-CROWN PRINCE AND EX-CROWN PRINCESS



CHAPTER X

THE CLOVEN FOOT BEGINS TO SHOW

THE incident which had taken place in St. Moritz had, as may be imagined, not improved the relations between the Crown Prince and Princess, but the latter after having for some weeks, and perhaps even months, given way to despair, at last entirely changed her point of view. She began, as I have already related, to seek outside of her home pleasures and amusements that might make her forget the miseries of her conjugal existence. She went out a great deal in society, bought wonderful gowns and surrounded herself with a small circle of young and rich people, of whom she very soon became the idol, and who tried to procure for her every possible kind of enjoyment in the way of balls, dinners, bridge parties and other entertainments. She was very popular, not only in this select circle, but also in society in general, and even the people of Berlin looked upon her with indulgent and affectionate eyes, perhaps because she was the first member of

96 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

the Imperial family to mix freely with them, and to walk alone and unattended in the streets of the capital, visit hospitals, schools and various public institutions, and also the dwellings of the poor and the needy, because, like all the members of the Romanoff family to which she belonged through her mother, she was extremely charitable. But at the same time there were other persons, and these were far more influential than the particular friends of Cecile, who blamed her for the recklessness of her conduct and for her extravagance, whilst the various Dowagers who ruled society in Berlin reproached her for ordering all her clothes from Paris, and for introducing French fashions into Germany. When she appeared for the first time at a court ball with a gown which had an unmistakable slit in the skirt, there was a terrible outcry everywhere, and the Kaiserin was asked to interfere and to tell her daughter-in-law that such a costume was not permissible at an official festival, which Augusta Victoria hastened to do, because she was perhaps the one who was the most scandalised by the Crown Princess's audacity. But her remarks were not taken in good part, because Cecile simply pouted her pretty lips, and replied that at twenty one did

not dress in the same way as people of fifty or sixty, and she was upheld in her revolt by her sister-in-law, the Princess Victoria Louise, who, being the Kaiser's prime favourite, could do pretty much what she pleased, and who had also flaunted before the Empress's scandalised eyes the most embarrassing slit in the various gowns she loved so much to order.

But what got Cecile into serious trouble was her entire recklessness in regard to money matters. Though she had ample means of her own, her grandfather, the old Grand Duke Michael of Russia, having liberally added to her dowry out of his private fortune because of his delight at her marriage, she never reckoned what she spent, and her different dressmakers' and milliners' bills were always growing and growing, so that at last even these long-suffering individuals began to get restive, and threatened their Imperial customer. Once a complaint was sent to the Kaiser, with the result that he flew into a passion and severely reprimanded his daughter-in-law; nevertheless he paid the outstanding account, but with the remark that it would be the last time and that if the Princess got into trouble again she could get out of it herself. Ce-

98 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

cile *did* get into trouble again, but this time it was to her mother she appealed, and Anastasia Michaylowna had to pay up, so as to prevent any more disagreeable consequences. She was an affectionate parent, and perhaps at heart she felt guilty for having influenced her daughter to wed the Crown Prince in spite of all that she had heard to his detriment, and to have thought more of the great position such a marriage implied than of the personal happiness of the girl who was contracting it.

It was not the Crown Princess alone who was extravagant; her husband also did not stint himself, so the couple were continually in financial trouble and difficulties, in spite of their considerable income. There were days when the superintendent of their household had to exert a large amount of tact in order to induce the tradesmen who catered for them to continue supplying them with needful commodities and at last he had to beg the Crown Prince not to take the large sum which the latter had asked him to bring him for his private expenses, because he could not hand it over without leaving the house exchequer so completely empty that the weekly bills of the cook and housekeeper could not be settled when they fell due.

The Cloven Foot Begins to Show 99

This enraged Frederick William, and he forthwith sought a friend, the son of a very wealthy man, and borrowed from him the money he wanted; but the latter was prudent enough to ask a promissory note in exchange, which he hastened to cash at a bank, and when he was asked to renew it, he replied that much as he would have liked to do so, he could not, because the document had passed out of his possession, circumstances having compelled him to discount it. When this disclosure was made to the Crown Prince there were but three days left before this terrible bill should become due. Go to the Kaiser? He had not the courage; the Kaiserin never had money to spare; banks asked any amount of guarantees which he could not have given without the matter reaching his father's ears. There remained his wife; he accordingly sought Cecile, and confessed to her the plight he was in. She also did not care for the Emperor to know of the difficulty in which his heir found himself, and she was quite ready to help the latter to the best of her ability, but she too had no money, nor did she know how to procure any without applying to her mother or her grandfather, and there was not sufficient time left for her to do this. The Crown Prince

100 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

then asked her whether she would not consent to pawn some of her jewels for a time until he should have succeeded in procuring the funds he needed. The Princess had a kind heart and other circumstances also influenced her as I have just said and induced her to try to do anything in order to prevent the story of her husband's imprudence becoming public property. So with many sighs and a few tears, she gave up the ruby and diamond parure she had received from the Kaiserin as a wedding present and it found its way to a pawnbroker's establishment in Vienna, Berlin having been considered as far too dangerous a place to risk such a transaction.

Things sometimes will go wrong in an entirely unexpected way. The Emperor wished to make his daughter-in-law a present for the coming Christmas, and he bethought himself that she had not any ruby bracelets to match her necklace, earrings and tiara. He accordingly asked the head maid of the Princess to bring him these ornaments unknown to her mistress, so that he might show them to the court jeweller, whom he had commissioned to make the bracelets he wished to offer her. The maid went to the safe (of which she had a duplicate key) where

The Cloven Foot Begins to Show 101

Cecile's jewels were kept and to her horror and surprise she found that the case which had contained the famous rubies was empty. Without saying a word to the Crown Princess she raised an alarm, and summoned the police, who immediately reported the matter to the Kaiser. The latter caused a searching enquiry to be made, forbidding Cecile's being informed of the supposed theft, not wishing to cause her needless worry and anxiety on account of the delicate condition of health she happened to be in at the time. The result of the investigation which he ordered was that the jewels on which he set such value and which were considered to be among the most precious possessions of the Prussian Royal family were found in a pawnbroker's establishment in Vienna, where, as was further discovered, they had been taken by one of the intimate friends of the Crown Prince, whom he had asked as a personal favour to help him out of his difficulty.

The man was immediately arrested, with the result that the whole sordid story came out, and the Emperor was advised that the best thing he could do would be to redeem the rubies, and try to hush up an incident which certainly reflected no credit on those who were connected with it.

102 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

This, however, was easier said than done. William II did redeem the ornaments and had them taken to the Crown Treasurer with injunctions to hand them over in the future to the Crown Princess only when she required to wear them, but not to leave them in her possession. Cecile rebelled, and asked why she was to be punished when she had tried to help her husband and to keep him out of a scrape at the price of a very heavy personal sacrifice. But what was her surprise when she was thereupon informed that the Crown Prince in order to avert from his own head the wrath of the Kaiser had told the latter that his wife had pawned her jewels unknown to him in order to pay her dressmakers' bills.

This was too much even for the patience of Cecile, and she furiously upbraided the puppet to whom she was bound, saying that she would return to her mother and would not live any longer with him. And she started that same evening for Schwerin, where she asked her brother to arrange a separation between her and the Crown Prince.

This was of course the last thing that the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg wanted to do, and he tried his best to smooth matters over, even going the



Photo by Paul Thompson.

EX-CROWN PRINCESS CECILE AND SONS



length of offering to pay his sister's debts, provided she would return to her duties and to her children. He added, what perhaps was more effective than anything else, that no matter what might be her grievances against the Crown Prince, she would not be allowed to take her boys with her if she left him, because, being Prussian princes, they would have to be brought up in the land of their birth. This proved the best argument he could have used, for, after many tears and considerable hesitation, Cecile was at last induced to return to Berlin, whither her brother escorted her, and where he had long conversations with the Emperor with the result that the latter spoke very kindly to his daughter-in-law, saying that he regretted what had happened, and that he advised her for the future to have more confidence in him, and if she or the Crown Prince ever got into trouble again, to come to him rather than resort to expedients unworthy of persons in her position. And to show that he was no longer displeased with her, he himself brought her back the jewels which had caused such trouble, also the bracelets he had wished to add to them, which he offered to her as a token of his forgiveness and affection.

CHAPTER XI

A YOUNG WIFE'S MISERY

WHEN the Crown Princess returned to Berlin she hoped, and indeed she had been told, that henceforward she would be better treated by her husband than she had been before the last scandal of which he was the hero. She was a proud little thing, and she did not care to complain, but at the same time she knew herself to be an object of pity to all those who were aware of all that she had to bear, and almost involuntarily she sought their sympathy and tried to win their approval. Of course this was easy for her, because no one cared for the Crown Prince; but it did not do her personally any good, for there were people who traded upon the confidences they received from her, and who talked far too much about the things she told them. Word of this got to the ears of the Prince, and of course he resented it; being absolutely brutal in character, he taunted his wife with her indiscretions, and threatened her in his turn with divorce and separation.

The life of unfortunate little Cecile was getting daily more difficult, and she had, besides, to bear with her two sisters-in-law, the wives of Prince Eitel Fritz and Prince August Wilhelm, who were both jealous of her, and who would dearly have liked to see her humiliated and forsaken by the Crown Prince. They reproached her, among other things, for being far too French and Russian in her tastes and sympathies, and they took advantage of every possible incident, no matter how insignificant, to make her unhappy and to make ill-natured remarks about her. For instance, the Crown Prince and his wife once gave a fancy ball at their palace in Berlin. It had been settled that all the members of the Royal Family present at this festivity were to wear old German fancy dresses, copied from family pictures in their possession. Cecile, when she was asked what she intended to wear, replied evasively, but gave her relatives to understand that she would appear in the costume of Queen Sophy Charlotte of Prussia, one of the most popular personages of the Hohenzollern family. Great therefore was the surprise of everybody when on the evening in question the Crown Princess made her entrance into the ballroom arrayed in a Russian

106 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

dress of the fifteenth century, which she had asked her cousins to send her from St. Petersburg, and when she was asked why she had not kept to her original intention of wearing a costume after some family picture, she coolly replied that she had also Russian relatives, and that she had never promised to copy the garments of her German ones. This answer was commented upon in anything but favourable terms, and, as may easily be imagined, it procured for Cecile a few more enemies in addition to those which she had already.

The Crown Prince, who was brutal and impolite in his speeches, began after this incident to call her "the Russian," and the nickname was taken up at once by his brothers, sisters-in-law, and cousins, and applied without the least discrimination to the unfortunate Crown Princess upon every occasion when she tried to assert herself or to express an opinion different from that of the rest of her family. Indeed people seemed to find a particular delight in repeating it, and in accentuating the fact that the wife of the heir to the German throne did not care for Germany or for Prussia, and regretted ever having married into that country. The last supposition was perhaps not altogether erroneous,

but it is certain that the Crown Princess never expressed it publicly.

She had given birth to three sons in quick succession, but this fact had not endeared her to her husband, whose passion for her had quickly vanished and who began once more to indulge in the flirting proclivities he had displayed before his marriage. These were to lead him very far, perhaps too far for the peace of mind of his wife, who though she did not care for him any more with the passion of earlier days, had too much pride not to resent bitterly his inconstancies. But she played the game in an admirable manner, in accordance with the promise which she had given her brother when he brought her back from Schwerin; no one heard any more complaints from her of the Crown Prince, no matter what private lamentations she indulged in concerning the other unpleasantnesses of her daily existence. She tried to close her eyes and not to notice what went on around her, and it was only when she was alone with her husband that she occasionally allowed the bitter contempt which she felt for him to break out and then she made some exceedingly sarcastic remark which cut him to the

108 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

quick, and to which he generally returned an insulting reply.

There was at that time in Berlin a young couple belonging to one of the most aristocratic families of Westphalia, who had recently settled in the capital. The lady was extremely pretty, but rather flighty and fond of admiration. She attracted the Crown Prince, who began paying her frequent visits and loading her with attentions which were so evident that they attracted considerable notice. The husband, though not in the least jealous, still did not care for his wife to be talked about, especially in connection with an individual like the future German Emperor. He warned her that this could not go on, and even went so far as to ask the Prince not to call so often at his house, as this gave rise to ill-natured remarks that hurt him as well as the Countess H. Of course Frederick William did not pay the least attention to this warning, and one day Count H. found him sitting in his wife's boudoir, kissing her pretty hands with all the fervour which he knew so well how to express whenever he was attracted by a pretty face. The two men exchanged angry words, and at last the Crown Prince became furious and struck his host in the face. The latter

happened to be a strong man six feet or so in height, and an athlete. He quietly took the future Sovereign by the collar and administered the soundest thrashing one man ever gave another, after which he donned his uniform and repaired to the Palace, where he acquainted the Emperor with everything that had taken place.

I leave it to the reader to imagine the feelings of the Kaiser when told of the mishap that had befallen his son and heir. He would dearly have liked to punish severely Count H., but how could he do so without proclaiming what it was policy on his part to conceal? He therefore contented himself with ordering the culprit to leave Berlin immediately with his pretty wife whose lovely face had been the cause of this catastrophe, and he decided to send the Crown Prince abroad for some months under the pretext of a journey around the world for the purpose of completing his education. But William II understood at the same time the necessity for this journey taking place under circumstances that would not provoke disagreeable comments, so he sent for his daughter-in-law and after explaining to her as well as he could without too greatly hurting her feelings the circumstances

110 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of the case, he asked her as a personal favour to consent to accompany her husband to India and elsewhere.

Princess Cecile refused. For one thing, she did not wish to be parted from her children for a whole year. Then she did not care at all to leave her home and her friends, in order to roam about the world in the company of a man who, she knew but too well, would show himself anything but a pleasant travelling companion. After a good deal of discussion, a compromise was at last effected. The Crown Princess consented to leave Berlin with the Prince, and to go with him as far as Egypt, but she asked permission to leave him there to continue his journey alone, and to remain herself in Cairo, whence she would make an excursion on her own account to Upper Egypt, taking her ladies-in-waiting, her chamberlain and her secretary, after which she was to be allowed to go back to Potsdam, where she wished to take up her residence until the return of the Crown Prince.

The Kaiser consented. Indeed he would have consented to anything provided he could hush the terrible scandal of which his eldest son had been the cause. So Cecile started with the Crown Prince

for the East, with the promise of William II that she would be allowed her own way, and not be asked to go to India or elsewhere with her fickle spouse, from whom, she owned, she would not be sorry to be parted for a while.

Before she left Berlin, the Kaiserin, who had been terribly grieved and perturbed at what had taken place, wished to show some graciousness to her daughter-in-law and, desirous of pleasing her, she ordered for her a complete outfit of new clothes suitable for a journey up the Nile. They were practical and even pretty clothes, but certainly not like the elaborate confections of which Cecile was so fond, and which were daily sent to her from Paris. The Crown Princess, instead of thanking her mother-in-law for her attention, simply remarked that she was sorry she had spent so much money on things which she could not possibly wear and, producing the garment which she had sent for from her usual French modistes, she completely flabbergasted the unfortunate Augusta by turning over to her maids the dresses she had selected, coolly remarking that they would also require thin garments during their journey to Upper Egypt.

Such incidents did not tend to make the Crown

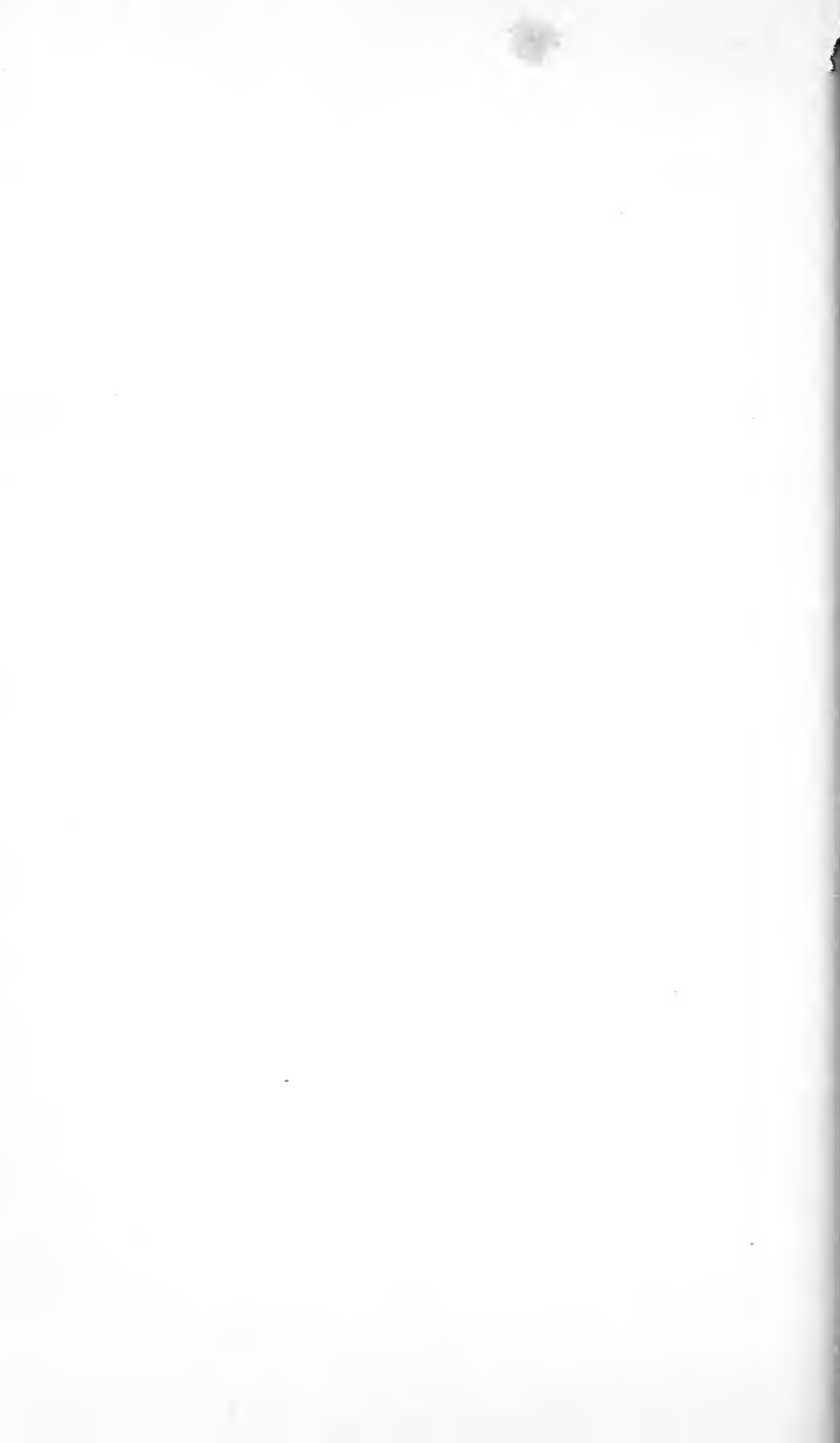
112 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Princess popular among the members of the Prussian Royal Family, whatever she was in society, and of course it was a thousand pities that she could not restrain herself better, but on the other hand one must make allowances for all that the poor little woman had endured and not judge her too harshly for her fits of impatience, which, when all was said and done, were amply justified by all the insults she had been subjected to, and by the brutality with which her husband continually treated her, a brutality that might have broken her heart and spirit had she not been an unusually strong and brave character.



Photo by Paul Thompson.

THE EX-CROWN PRINCE WITH HIS WIFE
AND THREE SONS



CHAPTER XII

THE SPHINX BY MOONLIGHT

IT was with a feeling of intense and real relief that the Princess Cecile parted from her husband and saw him embark on the steamer which was to carry him away to Ceylon, Bombay and numerous other places, which she did not care in the least to visit with him. She took a suite of rooms in one of the principal hotels of Cairo and settled there quietly with the intention of spending a winter far from the worries of Berlin, during which she would be able to do whatever she liked, and to see whomever she cared to know. Madame von Thiele Winkler had accompanied her, and it was then that the difference of character of the two ladies became more and more accentuated, and that sometimes unpleasant discussions took place between them. Cecile wished to lead the existence of a simple tourist, and to go about as any ordinary mortal would do. She took long rides, either on horseback or on a donkey, according to her fancy; she wandered in the Arab

114 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

quarters of Cairo; she spent hours sketching in the Island of Rhodes, or at Memphis, the ruins of which had an immense attraction for her, and in short she enjoyed herself in a perfectly innocent, but at the same time perfectly unconventional fashion, which caused her faithful Mistress of the Robes many heart-burnings, for her imagination recoiled with horror at the thought of her beloved princess running about with a Baedeker under her arm and chatting with all the dirty donkey boys she met. She thought such conduct undignified, and she remonstrated with Cecile on the subject of her levity, adding that she must not forget that she was the object of the general attention of the gay and cosmopolitan society of Cairo, who gossiped to its heart's content concerning her behaviour, and who did not scruple to call her flighty and giddy when it saw her cantering on the road leading to the Pyramids with her hair all untidy, and sometimes—oh, horror—without gloves. But the Crown Princess, who did not intend to allow any court etiquette to interfere with her pleasures, snubbed poor Madame Thiele Winkler, who at last gave up trying to check her young mistress, and confined herself to suggesting that perhaps it would be just

as well to think of proceeding to Upper Egypt before the weather got too hot to interfere with the pleasure of such an excursion.

The Crown Princess did not object; so a dahabeeah was hired, and the two ladies, accompanied by a chamberlain, started for Luxor and Assouan. Cecile was enchanted. She admired everything: the temples, the ruins, the sky, the river, the climate, the Arabs, and the fellahs,—everything, in short. They spent a few days at the hotel in Luxor, and the Princess was never to forget the wonderful evenings spent on the terrace overlooking the Nile, with the soft breeze fanning her cheek, and the wonderful stars and moon lighting the weird scene. She felt happy to live and to be there, and she tried to forget, and indeed forgot at times all she had already endured and all that awaited her in the future when the present dream would be at an end, and she should find herself once more in Berlin, condemned to play a part she knew that she did not act well enough to deceive any one who observed her, whether with a sympathetic or with a critical eye. She would have liked the present time to last for ever, and wished she had been born a simple mortal and not a Royal Princess, unable to

116 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

escape the fetters of an existence that had grown repugnant to her, in spite of all its splendour and the magnificence of its surroundings.

She said something to that effect to Madame Thiele Winkler, and the latter lady was horrified at hearing such language from the lips of her future Sovereign; so she decided that after such an experience she would not remain any longer with the Crown Princess, but would give her health as a pretext for resigning her position when they should return to Berlin; and in the meanwhile she addressed fervent prayers to Heaven that nothing disastrous might happen to her charge during the weeks that they had still to remain together in Egypt, the atmosphere of which she maintained was decidedly not wholesome for the Princess Cecile, who ought to be taken home as soon as possible. She wrote something to this effect to the Kaiser, urging him to recall his daughter-in-law, for whose actions and conduct she refused to be made responsible.

The good woman could not understand Cecile, and though she was devoted to her she certainly did not know how to guide her. If she had been wise, she would have been glad to think that the

Princess had at last an opportunity to live her own life in the innocent manner which she liked, free from the restraint she had been compelled to impose upon herself, and upon her actions, for so many years. But she was not wise, and the prejudices of her education and of the people who had surrounded her since her youth were stronger than her devotion to the unhappy girl who would so easily have opened her heart to her if she had only encouraged her to do so; and she could not understand why, feeling that she had no one to confide in, Cecile should have sought distraction in her loneliness and solitude by the contemplation of nature and the beauty of her surroundings.

The excursion to Upper Egypt took six weeks or so, and then the Crown Princess returned to Cairo for a few days previous to embarking for Europe. She wished to enjoy a short visit to the desert before making the return journey, and she repaired with her suite to Mena House. The Pyramids, and especially the Sphinx, had always had a singular attraction for her. She liked to sit beside the huge figure whose secret no one has guessed, especially by moonlight, when its mutilated features assume such a weird, strange expression, and on the last

118 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

evening of her stay in the little hotel that has seen so many visitors come and go since its erection at the very entrance of the desert, Cecile managed to slip out of her room unknown to any one, and made her way quite alone towards the Sphinx. She threw herself on the sand beside it and gazed into its sealed eyes, as if trying to guess the secrets which it had kept so jealously for so many thousands of years. She was so absorbed by her contemplation of the magnificent stone image that she did not notice a man who was coming rapidly towards the place where she sat until he actually stood before her, and in a voice which she had never thought she would hear again, addressed her.

"Princess, is it you? What a surprise! I never thought I would find you here."

And Cecile recognised the young American who had warned her so seriously against marrying the Crown Prince, at Cannes, so many years before.

"You!" she exclaimed in her turn. "How do you come to be here? If you only knew how often I have thought about you, all through these years!"

"Have you?" he exclaimed, "have you really thought about me? I had believed myself forgot-

ten, and yet God knows how often I have thought of you."

He stopped. He could not trust himself to say anything more. She was here before him, the creature of his dreams, more lovely, more beautiful, more charming than ever. And yet, and yet . . .

Cecile stretched out her hands toward him, and made him sit down on the sand beside her.

"I am so glad to meet you again. I have so often wished I could see you, and tell you how right you were in all that you said to me then, at Cannes. Oh, if I had but listened to you!"

"You are unhappy," he murmured.

"Yes," she frankly replied, "more unhappy than you can think or imagine. And I am so lonely, so entirely lonely."

And then she proceeded in her quiet voice to relate all that had passed during the long years which had elapsed since they had parted. She spoke without emotion, simply telling her story, but her accent of complete and absolute despair smote to the heart the young man who all through these years had cherished her memory as something sacred and holy.

For more than half an hour Cecile spoke, and

120 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

when she had finished, she once more stretched her hands towards her companion.

"And now that you know all, what do you advise me to do?" she asked. "I do so want to have a friend in whom I can confide. Will you be that friend?"

He looked at her with a curious expression of sorrow, affection and distress in his eyes.

"No, my poor little Princess," he replied, "I cannot be that friend. It would be repaying very badly your confidence in me if I allowed you to do anything which might harm you. Before your marriage I could have done anything you would have wished me to do for you, but now I must think for both of us. I know but too well how you are surrounded by impassable barriers beyond which you cannot step without endangering all the peace of your existence. For your sake, for your children's sake, I must not permit you to see me after to-night. Chance has brought us together, and perhaps chance has done right, because now I can hope that you will keep a little place for me in your beautiful heart, but help you beyond going away from you, I cannot, and God hear me, I will not."

Cecile burst into tears.

"You are cruel," she murmured through her sobs. "Why did we meet again if it is to end thus?"

"It is you who are cruel, my beloved Princess," replied the young man. "I am only doing my duty, and I should be a poor sort of creature if I allowed you to be carried away by your kind heart, and regardless of consequences harm yourself, perhaps to an irreparable extent. You are my ideal, my divinity, and you must not come down from the shrine in which I have placed you. Remember that any imprudence on your part would put terrible weapons into the hands of your enemies, and do not ask me to contribute to your fall and misfortune. I am thankful to God that He has granted me the joy of seeing you again, and looking once more upon your face. But I must not do it after to-day. Our paths in life are divided and wide apart. May Providence smooth the road you must walk upon! As for myself, well, I am a man, and I suppose that I can bear it."

The Crown Princess got up and stood before him. She was almost as tall as he, and her slight, slim figure stood out in a sharp outline against the darkness of the Sphinx and its immense, towering mass.

122 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

For a long time she remained immovable in that position, gazing at the star-lit sky; then at last she spoke, but this time it was in a husky voice, totally unlike her usual one.

"You are right, as you were right before; but why, oh, why has God put that temptation into my path?"

"Is it a temptation?" he exclaimed, with something like eagerness in his tone.

"Yes," she replied, "but you were right, we must trample it down."

He bent over her hands and kissed them reverently.

"Good-bye," he said, "but let me tell you one thing before we part. None of us knows what fate has in reserve for us, but if ever in the future years I can come to you without its harming you, and if you still think what you think now, still feel what you are feeling to-day, then, I beg you, call me! I shall come, and claim the friendship which I am obliged to refuse at present."

"Amen," answered the Princess solemnly.

And without adding another word she turned away and walked rapidly towards the hotel. On the threshold she turned round once more to see if

she could perceive the Sphinx in its silent grandeur, but the night had suddenly closed upon the scene, and blurred out the moon-lit landscape, upon which she had gazed a few moments earlier. Everything had grown dark outside as well as in her own heart. . . .

Three days later the Crown Princess and her suite sailed for Venice. She had told no one, and no one had guessed what had happened to her during that last visit she had paid to the Sphinx, into whose face so many have gazed in the vain hope of its betraying its eternal secrets.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT ABOUT THE CROWN PRINCESS IN BERLIN

THE Cecile who returned to Berlin was a very different woman from the one who had left it a short time before. She was more serious, more sedate, far less inclined for joking, and she began to exhibit considerable interest in books, politics, science, and other subjects which had not interested her during the early years of her marriage. She tried to find a diversion from her domestic trials by seeking the society of people of prominence in the German capital, rather than of the gay, butterfly set which had surrounded her formerly. Unfortunately for her this change in her character lost her a great deal of popularity. People reproached her for being fickle, and for neglecting her old friends, whilst those amidst whom she attempted to find new companions and associates looked upon her as a child in quest of new toys. She had so completely won for herself the reputation of a friv-

What People Thought About Princess 125

olous little girl that no one would believe in her conversion and all simply laughed at her when she attempted to revive the old traditions of the Kronprinzlichen Palais, as her town residence was called, such as it had been during the time when it was occupied by the Emperor Frederick III and his accomplished consort, the Princess Victoria of Great Britain. She gave small evening parties at which only notabilities in the world of letters, science and art were invited, but they proved a failure, because the hostess lacked the knowledge necessary to ensure their success, and also because it became very soon known that the Kaiser did not approve of these attempts of his daughter-in-law to create for herself a circle of friends who might easily, under her protection, become a source of embarrassment to the government. He once or twice gave the Crown Princess to understand that she had better stop her endeavours to become an independent personage in his Empire, but she paid no attention to his hints, and went her way without heeding the warning which reached her from various sources, thus jeopardising her amicable relations with her father-in-law, who indeed very soon grew tired of her and her reckless doings, of which he disap-

126 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

proved, so that she killed the friendship which had at one time existed between them, a fact of which the world very soon became aware, and which did not help to make her position any easier or pleasanter. Poor Cecile was fast drifting on a road that could only bring her trouble and sorrow, and she was to regret most bitterly later on having gone her own way in defiance of the good advice that had been given her by the few sincere friends she still had. It was about a month or so after her return to Germany from Egypt that her Mistress of the Robes, Madame Thiele Winkler, left her, not caring to be responsible any longer for many things of which she did not approve. Her place was taken by a certain Frau von Alvensleben, an excellent old woman, but with no experience of the world in spite of her knowledge of etiquette, and the last person capable of guiding the impetuous girl over whom she was supposed to watch. The Crown Princess simply ridiculed her, and laughed in her face whenever she remonstrated with her because of her disregard of the old-fashioned ceremonial in use at the Prussian Court. Cecile was beginning to assert herself, and in so doing she lost a good deal of her former popularity.

What People Thought About Princess 127

Her sisters-in-law were doing all they could to make her position an unpleasant one. For instance, when she sent out invitations for a series of small dances, which she gave after her return to Potsdam, they immediately criticised her action, remarking that it was most surprising "poor dear Cecile" cared to receive guests in her husband's absence when there was no one besides herself to do the honours of her house. "But to be sure," they added, "poor Cecile can not know what is seemly, having been brought up by that eccentric Russian woman, the Grand Duchess Anastasia of Russia."

These words were, of course, repeated to Cecile with the result that she became even more embittered than before toward her relations-in-law. What she particularly resented were the criticisms addressed to her mother, whom she loved so dearly, and missed so much. So she retaliated by not inviting to her next party the two Princesses who had offended her, which brought upon her head the wrath of the Kaiserin, who declared that such a breach of Court etiquette could not be tolerated, and herself brought her two other daughters-in-law to Cecile's dance, a fact that provoked the latter so much that she pretended a sudden indisposi-

128 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

tion and, leaving the Empress to receive her guests in her place, retired to her private apartments, from which nothing could make her emerge.

Of course all this was but a trifle, but very often it is trifles that play the most important part in the wrecking of human lives, and the Crown Princess of Germany was to find this out to her cost.

After the incident of this unfortunate party, Cecile, in defiance of the Kaiser and without asking his leave, had her boxes packed and left Berlin for a short visit to her mother at Cannes, under pretext of going to meet her sister, the Queen of Denmark. Once among the associations of her early youth the Princess became quieter, and more like her former self, but those who knew her well could not but observe the change that had taken place in her whole character, and wondered what grief she was carrying locked up in her heart.

She had never told any one, with the exception of her mother, of the incident which had taken place in Egypt, when she had been once more brought face to face with the young man who had been one of the constant visitors of the Villa Wenden in by-gone days, when she was still a girl, happy and careless of aught else but the pleasures of the hour.

What People Thought About Princess 129

The Grand Duchess, whose experience of life was great, guessed all the consequences which such an encounter might have in the future, and she urged Cecile to give up every thought of meeting again the splendid fellow whom they had both liked so much. She had her child's welfare at heart, and she did all she could to persuade her to look upon her lot in life with resignation, and to seek consolation in the brighter side of her present and future position, adding that everybody had his or her sorrows to fight against, and that it was useless to murmur at what could not be helped or cured but must only be endured.

And she did something more. She decided, much as she disliked Berlin and its court, to take the Crown Princess back to her home and thereby prevent people making ill-natured remarks concerning her long absence abroad. She wished also to thank the Kaiser for having allowed her daughter to visit her at Cannes, and to recommend her to him and to his affection. But William II, as I have had occasion to relate, hated the Grand Duchess Anastasia with an undying hatred, and he did not wish to see her or to permit her to come to his capital. So that to the surprise of the Crown Princess, as

130 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

well as to that of her mother, the latter received at the Swiss frontier a telegram from the Emperor telling her that one of the conditions of Cecile's marriage had been that the Dowager Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg should not come to Berlin, and therefore he asked her not to do so, because if she persisted in her intention he would be compelled to refuse to receive her, and to forbid her being seen with the Crown Princess in public.

It may be imagined what impression was produced by such a message on the impressionable nature of Cecile. She burst into floods of tears and declared that if the Kaiser refused to meet her mother, she would in her turn refuse to see the Kaiser, or to return home. Anastasia Michaylowna, however, was wiser than her daughter, and she urged her again to forget, forgive and make the best of circumstances, repeating the remark she had made once already, that she was younger than William II and therefore could count upon surviving him, when she and the Crown Princess would be free to do what they both pleased. So she kissed her daughter, and far from trying to keep her in Cannes, persuaded her to shorten her stay there, and to go back to her children, advice which her

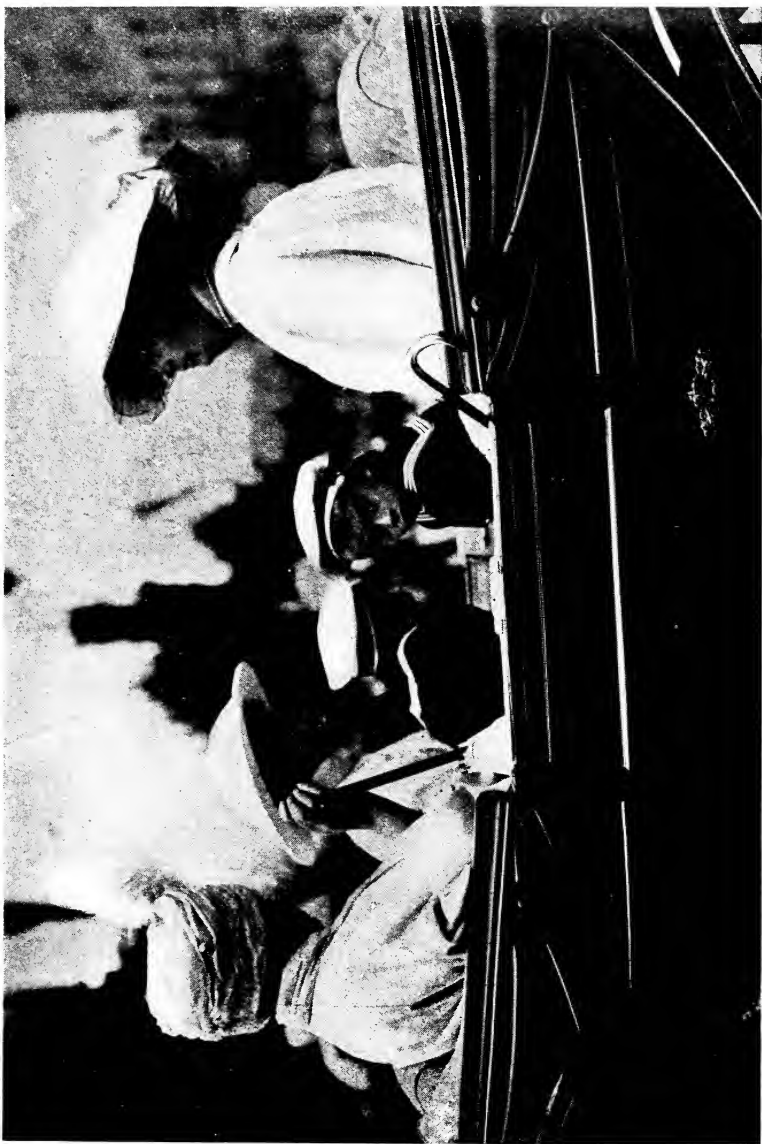


Photo by Paul Thompson.

THE EX-CROWN PRINCESS WITH HER TWO OLDEST SONS AND THE GRAND DUCHESS
OF MECKLENBURG-SCHWERIN



What People Thought About Princess 131

rebellious girl was at first not at all inclined to follow, and which perhaps she would not have followed but for the incident I am going to describe.

One morning the Crown Princess found in her mail a letter, the envelope of which was typewritten. She opened it with a certain curiosity, wondering who could be writing to her in that way, typewritten communications not being considered proper to send to Royalty, according to the etiquette prevailing at European Courts. She found within this envelope a small sheet of paper on which were the following words, also carefully typed:

“In your own interest, I urge you to return to Berlin. You would commit an irreparable mistake if you delayed doing so. In remembrance of the Sphinx, I entreat you to follow my advice.”

That was all. There was no signature, and the post stamp on the letter only showed that it had been sent from Paris. Otherwise there was no clue as to the identity of its writer, but Cecile knew at once who he was, and, after having shed many a tear, she told her mother at last that she was ready to obey her, and to go back to her dreary German Palace. She did not add that the mysterious letter that had reached her so unexpectedly had been

132 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

sown into a little silk bag, which Cecile hung around her neck, attached to a gold chain which she was never to take off until her husband, in one of his fits of rage, tore it away from her and threw it in the fire.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CROWN PRINCE'S RETURN

WHILST his wife had been battling with increasing difficulties, the Crown Prince had enjoyed himself. For the first time in his existence he had been free from every kind of restraint, and able to do just as he liked, without any reference to others. He had been extremely well received everywhere; in India especially great honours had been paid to him, and he had been given every possible opportunity to enjoy his favourite occupation, that of sport. He was a fine shot, which had predisposed in his favour all the Englishmen he had met, and he had tried to be amiable, and to make himself pleasant, so that the little indiscretions of which he had been guilty here and there had been hushed up, and the Kaiser was never informed of them. The Prince would have liked nothing better than to remain in India, with which he had quite fallen in love, but, alas, his orders were precise, and he was to go on to China and Japan. But at this very

134 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

moment troubles broke out in the latter countries and the heir to the German Throne had to forego his intended trip to the Far East, and to prepare to return to Berlin, having received a telegram that his presence was needed there.

He did not like it. Indeed, he would not have been human had he liked it. In Berlin he was nobody, whilst he had felt that he was very much somebody during his travels. Resistance, however, was quite out of the question, and the Crown Prince had to obey, and to embark on a German ship that carried him back to the dear "Vaterland" of which, like every good German, he was very proud. But on his way home he had an opportunity to think a great deal, with the result that he made up his mind to try to win for himself a position more important than the official one he was enjoying by right of his birth. He was clever enough to realise that in order to do this he required the assistance of his wife; so he showed himself exceedingly attentive to Cecile when she met him at the railway station, and when they returned to their own Palace, after the Prince had paid his respects to the Kaiser, he unfolded to the Crown Princess the plans which he had had the time to make on board ship, and asked

her whether she would help him in his desire to be initiated into politics, and to make himself popular with the army, that had never taken kindly to the Emperor, whom it accused of not having sufficiently at heart its welfare and interests.

Cecile had her own grievances against William II, so she readily fell in with her husband's suggestions, and promised him to do what she could to help him. They were both of them ambitious, through different motives it is true, but ambitious nevertheless, and they were both suffering from the persistence with which the Emperor refused to see in them anything else but children whom he could, when it pleased him, scold and even chastise according to his will.

Very soon it was rumoured that the Crown Prince had taken to studying seriously politics and military science, under the guidance of an eminent professor whom he had asked to help and advise him as to a course of serious reading which he intended to begin. It was further said that the Crown Princess was sharing his occupations, and that she also had become interested in the various serious subjects that had attracted her consort's attention. And this news was favourably received by the pub-

136 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

lic at large, as well as by the army, because at the annual Review which took place in Berlin during the first week in May, the Crown Prince, when he appeared on the field riding a superb bay horse, was received by the troops assembled there with vociferous acclamations that contrasted vividly with the silence which greeted the Kaiser when in his turn he arrived a few moments later.

The incident provoked the Emperor, and he forbade his heir to precede him on official occasions, changing the Court etiquette, in order that the Crown Prince might not become the recipient of acclamations which he considered he did not deserve. And wishing this order to be conveyed to him, he sent for the Crown Princess, and told her that she must acquaint her husband with his decision.

Cecile tried in vain to persuade her father-in-law that he had better speak himself to his son. The Emperor remained firm in his determination; so the Princess had no choice but to obey. And, as she had expected, her husband became furious with her, and accused her of intriguing against him. A stormy scene took place between them, and for the second time in their married life, the Crown Prince

lifted his hand against his wife, and would have dealt her a heavy blow if, luckily for her, she had not been able to escape through a door which led into the garden, where she sought a refuge until her irascible spouse had departed for Berlin, whither he repaired in obedience to an order from his father, who wished him to represent him on the occasion of the official opening of a school or hospital, such as took place almost every day in the capital. When she was quite sure that her husband had left the house, Cecile sent for her maids, and with their help removed her belongings to another part of the Palace, next to her babies' nurseries. She fully expected the Prince would be horrified when he discovered on his return home what she had done, but to her great surprise he only expressed his satisfaction, and merely remarked that he had never expected his wife to show herself so sensible as to deliver him from her constant presence at his side.

Nevertheless, he asked her later on not to change anything in their daily existence, and to continue to help him with her advice on political matters. He knew her to be an exceedingly clever woman, and he had confidence in her judgment. But this did not prevent him from thwarting her at every

138 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

step and making her life a burden to her. He had absolutely no delicacy of manner, and held the opinion that he had the right to do what he liked in regard to his wife and to all that belonged to her. For instance, one day being in want of money, he appropriated to himself the monthly allowance of the Princess, leaving her without a penny for her private expenses, save what she happened to have in her purse. Cecile complained, upon which the Kaiser had again to interfere, and to try to explain to his heir that he ought to discriminate between what belonged to him and to his consort. In spite of these domestic scenes, the public at large remained ignorant of the strained relations which existed between the Crown Prince and Princess. The latter was a proud woman, and she played the game extremely well, perhaps even too well in certain respects, because she affected an indifference which gave her family, or rather her husband's family, the impression that she was a heartless creature who did not care for anything in the world except her dresses, bonnets and hats, and for whom a cotillon was of more importance than the opinion of the public or the affection of her relatives. But all the while her heart was slowly breaking, and she was

thinking more and more of the friend of her youth, of the young and gallant American who had spoken to her with such deep emotion and respect on that day, or rather that night, when they had met under the shadow of the great Sphinx at Mena House. She wondered what had become of him, and what he was doing, and often she felt tempted to write to her mother and ask her whether she had heard from him. But her courage failed her; she knew that the Grand Duchess would not reply to her question, and that she would only be needlessly alarmed were she to know that her daughter was still clinging to the recollection of that memorable interview of which she had disapproved, and the remembrance of which she would have liked to drive out of the memory of poor little Cecile who, in her guileless way, sincerely believed that it was helping her to bear up under the difficulties with which her life was beset.

During those years the Crown Princess had become a beautiful woman. Her figure had developed and she had outgrown the delicate look which she had had as a girl. Her face, always charming, had assumed the lines which only appear after great waves of human sorrow have closed over a

140 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

woman's head. Her eyes, too, which frequently showed signs of moisture, had acquired a soft, sweet expression that might have revealed to a careful observer some of the inner battles which she had fought against her wounded pride, and her outraged heart and soul. The fact was that she felt like one imprisoned and she showed that such was the case.

Morally and intellectually she had also made wonderful progress. Common sense had killed the impetuosity of youth, and the necessity of repressing her thoughts and feelings had lent an additional charm to her manners and speech. She had become prudent, if not wise, and she had developed tact and knowledge of the world to an uncommon degree for one so young and so devoid of experience. And, as had not been the case before, she had at last realised all the importance of her position as the future Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia. She tried to find in its advantages, pomp and ceremony, solace if not consolation for her numerous woes. Ambition was beginning to take the upper hand of everything else, and it was only when ambition failed her that she took the great resolution of giving up all that had been left her, to ac-

The Crown Prince's Return 141

quire what had failed her all through her life—the affection of a good and honest man who, though loving her to distraction, had never once dared to tell her so.

CHAPTER XV

MOTHER, MOTHER, WHY CAN'T YOU COME TO ME?

THERE was at that time among the fashionable ladies belonging to the cream of Berlin society a young person whose name it is needless to mention, who enjoyed quite a privileged position at Court, owing to her great name, the illustrious family of which her husband was the head, his wealth, and her own beauty and attractive personality. The Crown Prince had always admired the Duchess of A., and though perhaps this admiration was not mutual, yet the latter would have liked to become the Egeria of the future Monarch, and to play an important part in the political game, of which the peace of Europe was the stake. She was clever, and her propensity for intrigue made her a formidable enemy for the Crown Princess, whose honest, straightforward nature could never have lent itself to anything which savoured of underhandedness and who always followed what she considered

to be the right way, without accepting compromises, which she considered beneath her dignity. The Duchess took to inviting the Crown Prince to visit her, not only in her Berlin flat, but also in the magnificent castle which the Duke possessed on the banks of the Rhine, where she used to spend part of the year with him, and where she entertained her friends with great pomp and magnificence. She was an ambitious woman, and many people said that her aim was to get the heir to the German Throne to divorce his wife, and to marry her, after she had herself divorced her own husband, which it would not have been at all difficult for her to do. Cecile had always disliked her, and had made no secret about the fact, a circumstance that rankled deep in the heart of the energetic and clever Duchess, and that she never forgave. Accordingly she set herself to embitter the Crown Prince against his consort, and to repeat to him every detrimental thing which ever reached her ears concerning the Crown Princess, whom she tried to paint in the blackest colours, an easy thing to do because he was but too ready to believe any accusation against his wife, no matter what might be its nature. He had become thoroughly weary of her, and since his re-

144 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

turn from India had neglected her more than ever, notwithstanding the fact that he had asked her to help him in his various ambitious schemes. Now Cecile, though she no longer loved her husband, would yet have given a good deal to be able to live with him once more upon the terms of confidence and intimacy which had existed between them during the first months that had followed upon their marriage. She was also ambitious, and she had at last grasped the wisdom of her mother's advice, to try to make the best of her disagreeable position, in view of the splendid prospects it offered to her in the future. The idea that another woman could come to be paramount in her consort's affection was therefore exceedingly unpleasant to her, and she snubbed the Duchess of A. whenever she could conveniently do so, going so far as to tell her one evening that she ought to have put on a different dress, the one which she had on being so ugly and so badly made. As may be imagined, this remark did not help to improve the relations between the two ladies. The climax of the story was reached one day when, through the mistake of a servant, a letter from the Duchess addressed to the Crown Prince fell into the hands of the latter's

wife. It was a compromising letter in the sense that it proved he had given her his entire confidence and had even consulted her upon different political matters, which he had carefully refrained from mentioning to the Crown Princess. Cecile was shrewd enough to grasp at once the capital she could make out of this proof of the fickleness of Frederick William's character, and she immediately laid the incriminating document under the eyes of her father-in-law, asking him at the same time what he advised her to do under such painful circumstances.

The Emperor was stunned. He also had been one of the admirers of the Duchess of A., a fact of which his daughter-in-law had not perhaps been entirely ignorant, and it hurt him to the quick to find that she was upon such terms of intimacy with his own son. He sent for the minister of his household, Count von Eulenburg, and told him that he must contrive in some way to induce the Duke of A. to leave Berlin, and not to return for a considerable time. Count von Eulenburg did not care at all for this mission, and he told the Emperor so, adding that he thought the best thing would be for the Sovereign to speak himself to the Duke, and, under pretext of caring for the peace of mind of the

146 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Crown Princess, ask him to take his lovely wife away, at least for some time, so as to put an end to the jealousy of his daughter-in-law. William II followed this advice, but the result of it was as unpleasant as unexpected, because the Duke of A. immediately challenged the Crown Prince to a duel, saying that he could not allow the world to say that he had compromised the Duchess in any way whatsoever.

The situation became a very embarrassing one. The Duke of A.'s birth and social position made him the equal of the Crown Prince, and he had, according even to the strictest notions of etiquette prevailing at any German court, the absolute right to claim satisfaction for his supposed wrongs from the Heir to the German Empire. It was not, however, the intention of the Kaiser to allow such a duel to take place. He hated a scandal above everything else in the world, and did not in the least mean his son to become entangled in one if he could help it. So the Duke of A. was simply told he had better repair to his Rhenish castle and estate, and the Crown Prince was given peremptory orders to forget everything that concerned the Duchess of A. He might have done so, because constancy certainly

did not figure among his virtues, had it not been that his wife had not sufficient tact to keep her secret, and not give him opportunities to upbraid her, and to accuse her of conspiring against his peace of mind. Cecile was not gentle or forbearing, and on the day that she discovered the Prince had other interests in life than his home and his children, she hardened her heart against him, and made him pay bitterly for all the recklessness of his conduct in regard to her, and to her claims on his consideration and respect.

The Duke of A. had been compelled to submit to the request of the Kaiser, and to leave Berlin. He had, however, made his conditions before bidding good-bye to the ugly city on the banks of the Spree: he had stipulated that his departure should not be hastened unnecessarily, and that he should be permitted to entertain his numerous friends, and to be entertained by them, previous to his departure. This had been granted him, and for about a month or so the aristocracy and social leaders of the German capital outvied themselves in the receptions which they organised in honour of the lovely Duchess. One of these festivities took the form of a ball which was given at the house of Prince S.,

148 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

one of the most important personages at the court of William II. The Duchess of A. was awarded a place of honour, and told to take her seat at the supper-table at which the Crown Princess presided, which of course was a very tactless thing to do. Cecile, when she saw her rival approach her, turned her back upon her, and said in a loud tone of voice, and perfectly distinctly: "I do not want to have the Duchess at my table; give her a seat at the one over which the Crown Prince presides; it will be much better, and make everybody happier, myself included."

One can imagine the scandal! The Duke of A., who had overheard the words of the Crown Princess, went up to her and asked her what she meant. Cecile looked him straight in the face and replied, as loudly as she could, that she meant exactly what she had said: that the Crown Prince would know how to entertain the Duchess, a thing which she could never undertake to do.

The Duke of A. did the only thing that a gentleman could do. He offered his arm to his consort, and led her from the room. The next day, both husband and wife left Berlin, with the intention of never returning there again. Cecile triumphed, but

only for a short time, because she was summoned by the Kaiserin, who severely reprimanded her, and told her that in her position she ought never to see or notice anything, and must only show herself pleased with everything that befell her.

As may be imagined, this did not at all suit the Crown Princess, who immediately wrote to her brother, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, asking him whether it was her duty to submit without murmuring to all the slights to which her husband and his lady friends were constantly subjecting her. The Grand Duke, whose mission in life appears to have been to restore union and peace in his sister's ménage, hurried to Berlin and attempted to reason with the Princess, and to induce her not to notice the inconsequences of her husband. He felt, of course, very sorry for her, but at the same time he could not close his eyes to the importance which he would himself acquire later on, when he would have become the brother-in-law of the German Emperor, and he did not mean to permit his sister to take any rash step that might have been interpreted in an unfavourable way. But all that he could obtain from Cecile was a promise to abstain from taking any decisive step until she

150 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

had had an opportunity to consult her mother. They accordingly both wrote to the Dowager Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, asking her to tell them what, in her opinion, ought to be done. But long before these letters reached Anastasia Michaylowna, in the French home where she had spent her time since the marriage of her daughter, the latter had realised all the drawbacks to the brilliant future she had imagined she was going to enjoy, and in her agony and distress of soul and mind had thrown herself more than once upon her bed, to smother her sobs in her pillows, with the heartrending exclamation: "Mother, Mother, why can't you come to me?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE CROWN PRINCE'S BRUTALITY

IT was at about this time that the Crown Prince fell under the influence of the German military party, and allowed it to look upon him as the partisan of a new war with France or with Russia, or with both these countries. He thought it a good means of becoming popular, and this was something he had always longed for but had never attained. So he invited several officers from the General Staff to dinners and evening parties, after which he eagerly discussed with them the chances which Germany had of winning the new campaign that was once for all to make her the supreme mistress not only of Europe, but of the whole world. The Kaiser was blamed by him and his friends for having refused to take aggressive measures in regard to France as the Staff had urged him to do ever since the famous Agadir incident. They all declared that it was a shame Germany had climbed down before the Entente, and that nothing short

152 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of a victorious war could wipe out this humiliation. These young men, in company with the heir to the throne, had started working at the remodelling of the whole map of Europe. Many plans concerning the future campaign were laid before the enthusiastic eyes of the Crown Prince, until at last the Emperor thought it necessary to curb his warlike tendencies, and after the famous incident which took place in the Reichstag, when the Prince loudly expressed his opinion by applauding the several speeches of the opposition when it attacked the government in regard to its foreign policy, William II, perfectly furious with his first born, entrusted him with the command of the famous regiment called the Death Hussars, stationed in Dantzic, and sent him to that distant town with strict orders not to return to Berlin unless specially summoned. The Crown Prince, of course, could not resist, and started with the Princess for what was nothing more nor less than exile. But there again he committed one of those indiscretions for which he had already made himself famous, and on assuming the command of his regiment made that remarkable speech which was reproduced in the newspapers of the whole world, in which he told his men that the

The Crown Prince's Brutality 153

only thing he looked forward to was to be able to lead them in war against the enemies of the country.

One may imagine how poor Cecile suffered from all these exuberant demonstrations, which by that time had become quite familiar to her husband. She was half Russian by birth; she loved Russia and its Imperial family, who had received her with effusion when she had paid them a visit shortly after her marriage, and all her early associations were connected with France, where she had been brought up and where she had spent the happiest years of her life. The idea that Germany might have to go to war with either of these two countries was inexpressibly painful to her, and her intelligence told her that such a struggle, if it ever took place, would have the most disastrous consequences for the whole of the civilised world. She therefore tried to stop the Crown Prince from giving way to his expressions of enthusiasm in regard to a future campaign that, according to her opinion, was bound to end in ruin for all the parties concerned in it. Her opinion, however, mattered but little in the eyes of her husband, who, on the contrary, taxed her with stupidity and ignorance whenever she ventured to express her ideas on this burning subject, so that

154 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

the poor girl (she was hardly yet anything else) had at last to make up her mind never to say what she thought, and to retire to her own apartments whenever the Prince entertained the friends he liked to gather around him upon every possible occasion.

One evening she was sitting alone in her boudoir, writing to her mother. From the dining-room of the small villa which the Crown Prince and his family occupied in Dantzic the sounds of revelry reached her ears. Her husband was entertaining the officers of his regiment, champagne was flowing freely, and speeches without number were being made. The shouts of "Hurrah! Hurrah!" shook the whole house, and poor Cecile felt quite dizzy from the noise. She did not care to go to bed, experience having taught her that when Frederick William was getting intoxicated, the best thing she could do was to wait until he had retired before doing so herself.

So she took up some needlework, and tried to think of something else than the misery of her own existence. But this was easier said than done, and the unfortunate Cecile started dreaming of what might have been, and of all that she had missed in

life. And then she remembered her American friend, and saw him once more in her imagination, tall and handsome, brave and gentle, incapable of a mean action or of an unkind deed. And whilst recapitulating in her mind all the details of their short acquaintance, she pulled out from her bosom the little white silk bag, in which she had sewed the letter which she had received some years before and which she felt certain had come from him, because no one else in the world could have given her such sound and disinterested advice. She undid the threads which held the bag together, and began gazing at the crumpled sheet of paper, which meant so much to her. So absorbed was she in her contemplation of it that she did not notice the door of the room opening slowly until the Crown Prince stood before her, with a face which told her at once that he had been drinking heavily.

"What are you looking at?" he asked her.

"Nothing, nothing," she replied, taken so much aback by the sudden appearance of her husband that she did not know what to say in her confusion.

"What do you mean by nothing? It was a letter you were reading; show it to me."

"I will not," replied the Princess, whose presence

156 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of mind was returning. "It does not concern you, and it is not a letter received now; it is quite an old one."

"An old one that you carry on your heart. Why do you lie?" angrily exclaimed the Crown Prince. "Show me that paper; show it to me," he thundered.

"I will not," answered his wife, who by this time had risen from the armchair in which she had been reclining; "it does not concern you, and, besides, you would not understand it."

"What do you mean by that? Do you think that I am an idiot, that I could not understand what is written on that paper? Once more, will you give it to me? It must be something very precious to you that you carry it next to your heart."

Cecile simply walked towards the door without replying, but the Crown Prince, who was decidedly the worse for drink, seized her by the arm with such violence that he nearly threw her on her knees.

"You are going to give me this letter," he screamed, and, tearing it from the clasped fingers of his wife, he perused its contents with eagerness.

"So," he said, after a pause, whilst the terrified Princess crouched against the door, "this is a pretty state of things. You are having a secret corre-

The Crown Prince's Brutality 157

spondence with a man whom I do not know, and you are complaining to him about me. Well, you shall have reason to complain now, because I am going to chastise you as you deserve."

He seized her once more by the arm, and, getting hold of a riding whip which happened to be lying on the table of the hall where he dragged her, he began raining blows upon the shoulders, back and even face of the miserable Cecile, whose screams awoke the servants. They, thinking that something dreadful had happened, came rushing from their rooms below. The butler threw himself upon the Prince and managed to rescue the Princess, who fled to her own rooms, but not without having seen the letter she had carried about for so long a time, and considered as her most cherished possession, thrown into the fire that was blazing in the large French chimney in the hall.

Once in her private apartments, where she hastened to lock herself, Cecile burst into the most bitter tears she had yet shed since her unhappy marriage. Her whole body was hurting her, and on her cheek one long, red line was standing out clear and distinct on her white, delicate skin. She felt degraded, humiliated, dragged into the gutter; and

158 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

all her instincts of revolt arose in arms against the brute who had inflicted such an outrage upon her. She made up her mind that she would not bear it any longer, and that the only thing that remained for her to do was to run away, and seek this time forever a refuge among her own family. Surely her brother, when he saw the traces of the terrible treatment to which she had been subjected, would take her part and defend her. There were her children, of course, but she hoped that the Kaiser would prove merciful and allow her to keep them, at least part of the year. But for the present the only thing left for her to do was to fly; to get away from the man who had degraded them both by his monstrous brutality.

She opened her wardrobe and took out a dark travelling costume, which she put on with trembling hands. Then she packed a small suit-case with a few necessary articles, hid her jewels, at least some of the most valuable ones, in the bosom of her dress, and after having taken money from her private drawer, where she always kept some ready for emergencies, she softly entered her children's room. The little boys were sleeping peacefully, and the mother bent down and kissed them fondly, with a choking

sensation in her throat, after which she slipped down the back staircase, unlocked the door leading into the courtyard, and made her way through the dark streets to the railway station. Her face, with its hideous red mark, was covered with a thick veil, and no one could have recognised in this simply-attired woman carrying her baggage the future Empress of Germany. At the station she was lucky enough to find a train starting south, and, having taken a second-class ticket, she left Dantzig for an unknown destination, not having yet made up her mind where and to whom she was to go, whether to her brother in Schwerin, or to her mother who, she knew, was at that moment staying in Geneva. She decided at last to join the latter, knowing she would get more sympathy from her than from the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, who, being a reigning sovereign, was always more or less swayed by dynastic considerations, and would try to patch up her relations with the Crown Prince, a thing to which she was determined never to consent.

The train stopped at Berlin, and the Princess crouched in the corner of her second-class carriage, in terrible fear of being recognised. But no one thought of looking for her there, though by that

160 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

time the news of her disappearance had already reached the Kaiser and he had given strict orders to look for and find her, no matter where she might be. But, somehow, no one had imagined that the runaway Cecile would have the courage to go through the capital where she was so well known. Therefore, no one sought for her there, and to her relief the train went on again, carrying her farther and farther from her husband and from her life of misery. When she had passed Frankfurt, she thought that she was saved, and looked eagerly towards the moment when she would reach Bâle and be on Swiss soil. There she meant to telegraph to her mother and ask her to come and meet her at Lucerne. But fate did not prove kind to her, and her hopes were doomed to be cruelly disappointed, because at Lindau, the last station before the Swiss frontier, the door of the carriage in which she sat was rudely opened, and an officer in full uniform addressed her by her title of Imperial Highness, and asked her in the name of the Emperor to get out of the train and honour him with a few moments' conversation in her own interest, as otherwise he would be obliged to say to her before witnesses what he would far rather communicate to her

The Crown Prince's Brutality 161

in private. The Princess saw that she was trapped and that nothing could avail her; therefore, she haughtily stepped out and followed the officer into the station, where she sat down on one of the hard chairs in the private office of the station-master whither she had been conducted and, without asking the officer to do the same, simply said that she was waiting to hear what he had to tell her.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR

WHAT had happened was as follows: The Crown Princess's maid, when she came into her room on the morning following the terrible scene which I have related, found that her mistress's bed had not been slept in, that some clothes of hers were missing, and that there was no trace of her. Of course the girl raised an alarm, and a search was instituted in the grounds of the villa. The servants all knew by that time what had taken place between Cecile and her husband, and the sympathies of the whole household were with the unfortunate woman who had been so terribly ill treated. The great fear which pervaded the simple minds of these faithful retainers was that in her despair she had done away with herself. The Prince was immediately informed of his wife's absence, but this did not seem to trouble him, because the only remark he made was to the effect that he was very glad to be rid of the creature. The Emperor, however, to whom the

news had been telegraphed, did not share this opinion, because he immediately gave orders to make a thorough search for his daughter-in-law, and after a few hours it was ascertained that a lady deeply veiled had left Dantzic by an early train on the morning following the last exposition of brutality on the part of the Crown Prince. After this it became relatively easy to follow Cecile to Lindau, and the Kaiser sent orders to the General in command of the garrison of the town to proceed to the railway station, stop the Princess, and send her back to Berlin under escort.

The officer in question did not in the least relish the mission with which he had been entrusted, but he had no choice except to obey, and accordingly he presented himself before Cecile, as has been already related, and with great caution informed her of the commands which had been laid upon him, asking her at the same time by what train it would please her to return to Berlin. The first instinct of the Princess was to refuse to return. She showed the General the red marks upon her cheek, and asked him whether he could wonder that she preferred anything, even death, to living again with the man who had so far forgotten himself as to ill treat her

164 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

in such an abominable fashion. The poor officer was entirely of her opinion, but he had to perform his duty, and therefore he could only urge Cecile to try and forgive, and advised her to place herself under the protection of the Kaiser, who no doubt would be able to prevent a repetition of such outrages. But in the meanwhile she could do nothing but return to her own home, where her children and her household awaited her, and would receive her with all the respect due to her position as heiress to the Throne. The Princess pleaded to be allowed at least to meet her mother, but she was told that this request of hers had been foreseen, and that the Emperor had decreed that under no pretext whatever was she to be allowed to cross the Swiss border, and that if she persisted in doing so, she was to be prevented by force from accomplishing her intention.

Cecile bitterly regretted then that she had not telegraphed from Frankfurt or some other place to the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg to come and meet her in Bâle or elsewhere. She had been afraid of doing so, but her very precaution in that respect had proved her undoing. She saw that she was trapped, therefore thought that the best thing she

could do was to exercise some diplomacy, so she told the General that she was ready to obey the orders of the Emperor, but that she was thoroughly tired and worn out, therefore she asked him to allow her first to go and rest for a few hours at an hotel in the town, after which she would start on her return journey. She also begged the Emperor to send her her maid and some clothes, as she did not care to appear before him in the dilapidated condition to which her two days' uninterrupted journey had reduced her.

General von X. was but too delighted to grant the Princess's request. He conducted her with great ceremony to the best hotel Lindau could boast of, promised her that he would immediately wire to Berlin transmitting her request to the Kaiser, and begged her meanwhile to rest quietly, and try to sleep off her fatigue. He asked her at the same time not to be offended if in compliance with the commands he had received he put a sentry before her door, merely, he hastened to say, as a measure of precaution to prevent any one disturbing her. As for her meals, he thought that she would most probably prefer having them served in her own apartment rather than in the dining-room. Cecile

166 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

did not reply. She knew that she was a prisoner and that nothing remained for her to do except to submit. But she made up her mind to try, at least, to notify her mother of what had happened. So when the chambermaid of the hotel entered her room to make the bed she rushed up to her, and putting into her hand a thousand-mark bill and a telegram she had contrived to write, she begged her to send the latter to its destination, promising her another thousand marks if it reached the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg that same day.

The woman could not resist the enormous bribe, and she despatched the message, which found Anastasia Michaylowna in Geneva, where she still resided, and, as may be imagined, considerably disturbed her.

She was a very energetic woman, who quickly made up her mind what to do in a case of emergency. An hour after her daughter's appeal had been put into her hands she was in a train, and a few hours later arrived in Lindau, where she had herself driven to the hotel where the Crown Princess was eagerly awaiting her. Brushing past the manager of the establishment, who did not know who this unexpected guest was, she rushed upstairs,

but there found herself confronted by the sentry that General von X. had stationed at Cecile's door, who not only challenged her, but declared that if she tried to enter the room, he would use force to prevent her from doing so. The Grand Duchess was not a Romanoff for nothing. She seized the soldier by the arm and pushed him aside, calling as she did so her daughter's name as loudly as she could. The Princess recognised her mother's voice and immediately opened her door, when the two women fell into each other's arms.

General von X. was advised of what had taken place, but he was helpless. In spite of the orders of his Sovereign he did not well see how he could use violence towards ladies, one of whom was the wife of his future Emperor, whilst the other was the cousin of the Czar of Russia. The only thing he could do was to wire again to Berlin for instructions.

These were not long in coming. The Kaiser gave directions for the Crown Princess to be brought back to Berlin as soon as the two ladies-in-waiting whom he was sending to escort her should have reached Lindau. As for the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, she was under no condition whatso-

168 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

ever to be permitted to accompany her daughter, and General von X. was further told to try to do what he could to induce her to return to Switzerland immediately.

This, however, was easier said than done. Anastasia Michaylowna refused to move. She locked herself up with the Crown Princess, declaring that she would not leave her, and in her turn she telegraphed to her son, the reigning Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, telling him to what condition his sister had been reduced. She also sent a message to William II, asking him whether he could tolerate the idea of the Crown Prince laying his hands upon his wife and nearly killing her under his blows. She added that she would make it her business to acquaint all the other European Sovereigns with what had happened, and also ask the Czar to interfere in the interests of his cousin. Of course, the latter could not go on living with the man who had treated her in such an infamous manner, and she hoped that the Emperor would arrange a separation between them, in which the Crown Princess would be left in possession of her children, who, added Anastasia Michaylowna, would certainly be

better brought up by their mother than by a father to whom the decencies of life were unknown.

This message did not contribute to allay the wrath of William II. He was, however, helpless in a certain sense; so he said nothing, but before even the household of the Crown Princess had reached Lindau, he sent out directions to General X. to hasten the departure of the latter, and to compel her to start without a moment's delay. He further added that she was not to be left for one single moment alone, and that if she tried to write a letter, no matter to whom, it was to be immediately confiscated and sent on to him instead of to the addressee.

But the Crown Princess was far too wise to write to any one. She had told her mother all that she had to tell, and after many promises from Anastasia Michaylowna to move heaven and earth to deliver her from the detestable husband to whom she was bound, she started on her return journey to Berlin. The Grand Duchess was not allowed to accompany her daughter to the railway station, but had to part from her at the hotel, and with two ladies-in-waiting and two maids in the same carriage with her, and three officers located in the next

170 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

compartment who had instructions not to permit her to get out, the young wife of the Crown Prince of Germany started on her new journey to Berlin, a State prisoner.

CHAPTER XVIII

YEARS OF SADNESS

CECILE during the whole of her return journey to the mockery of a home, which was all that she had to look forward to, cried bitterly. For one thing she did not at all know what was to become of her, whether she would be kept a prisoner in some castle, or sent back to Dantzic, where probably she would be treated by her husband even more brutally than before. The thought of having once more to meet and to live under the same roof as the Crown Prince was inexpressibly painful to her, and she also felt frightened at what the Kaiser would have to say to her, being perfectly well aware that he must have felt furious at her audacity in running away. There was still a red mark on her cheek, and she was glad of it, because she could at least show her father-in-law the traces of his son's cruelty and ask him whether he approved of such treatment. She prepared for a fight in which she knew beforehand she would be beaten, but which she was

172 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

none the less determined to carry on, if only as a means of justification for the grave step which she had taken in forsaking her husband's house. She was therefore greatly surprised when she reached Berlin to find the Emperor and the Empress and her own two eldest little boys awaiting her on the platform of the station, and to be tenderly embraced by them, as if she had done nothing at all to displease them. The Sovereigns accompanied her to her Berlin Palace, which had been opened and made ready to receive her, and she was informed that it had been decided she should remain there for some time, under the protection of her parents-in-law, and have with her her small family. What had happened was the following: William II had been made aware of the strong current of sympathy which existed between the public and the Crown Princess, as well as of the general condemnation passed upon her husband. Vague rumours that she had left him in the dead of night had been circulating, but no one knew exactly what had occurred, and it had been thought advisable to let people remain in ignorance concerning the whole episode. It was given out that the Princess Cecile had been spending a few days with her mother,

having been summoned to her unexpectedly in order to discuss certain financial family matters, and, to show that she had done nothing against the wishes of the Kaiser, he had decided to receive her not only with pomp and ceremony, but also with affection, in order to throw dust in the eyes of the world, that was never to know the disgraceful truth. The Berlin season being just at hand, the presence of the Crown Princess in the capital would be easily explained, and the Emperor told her that she was to go about and show herself in public just as much as she had done before, and perhaps even a little more.

He said to her all this in a long conversation which they had together on the day following her return (a conversation during which she wept profusely and was soothed only by the promise that in future she would not be subjected to such treatment as she had been compelled to put up with), that the Crown Prince would be told, had in fact already been told, that if he once more forgot himself to the extent of striking his wife he would be immediately locked up in a fortress to remain there for an indefinite time. In communicating this decision to the unfortunate Cecile, the Kaiser added

174 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

that she had been very wrong not to have come to him immediately, because it was his duty as head of his House to see that it was not disgraced by the actions of any of its members, and that he considered it a personal affront that she had fled to her mother, instead of asking him to interfere. He showed himself in general very kind and affectionate to the Princess, whom he had always liked, and during the months that followed he saw a great deal of her and tried to get her to consider him as her best friend. She was bright and witty, and perhaps the fact that she was so different from the Kaiserin and all the German Princesses he had been accustomed to meet had endeared her to him. She amused him by her ready wit and the rapidity with which she grasped at once the humorous side of things. The Kaiserin had never possessed a sense of humour and had always looked upon the serious and dull side of life, so it was just possible that William II had become bored by the goodness of his consort and was not sorry to find in his own family circle a person capable of appreciating a joke, or noticing the funny incidents that took place around her. So Cecile's escapade, which according to her expectations was to have brought her into

eternal disgrace with the Emperor, had, on the contrary, strongly influenced him in her favour, and gave her quite a privileged position with him. He even took to consulting her in different matters which the prudish feelings of the Empress would never have allowed him to discuss with her, and very soon his pretty daughter-in-law became such a favourite with him that the world began to say she could twist him around her little finger, in a way no woman had ever done before, and that he had grown to care for her almost as much as he did for his own daughter, the wilful Princess Victoria Louise, who since her birth had ruled with a rod of iron her whole family, including her father, mother and brothers, and whose word was law in the Hohenzollern family.

It was this sister-in-law who had done more than any one else to bring about the change that had taken place in the feelings of the Emperor towards the Princess Cecile. The two girls were extremely fond of one another and had been good friends ever since the marriage of the Crown Prince, when Victoria Louise had been a long-legged, lanky child who, spoiled and petted by everybody, had always had her own way in life, and had never troubled

176 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

about others. The Crown Princess had taken a liking for her from the first, and had evinced quite a maternal interest in her, hoping she might one day be useful to her and help her in the choice of a husband, so as to save her from her own disappointments and sorrows, and Victoria or Sissy, as she used to be called in her family circle, had also become warmly attached to her elder brother's wife, upon whom she looked as a dainty little fairy in her elegant and smart Paris clothes, so different from anything ever worn in Berlin. Later on, when the little Princess had reached womanhood, she came to appreciate Cecile for other things than her lovely French dresses and she learned to understand the sweetness of her nature and the gentleness of her disposition. When the day of love dawned for her it was to the Crown Princess that she confided her feelings of affection for the young son of the Duke of Cumberland, whom she feared her father would never allow her to marry; and it was Cecile who pleaded her cause, uselessly as it turned out, because William II was but too glad to agree to a match that would put an end to a family feud that had lasted for almost half a century; so he did all he could to promote it, unknown to his family,

out of fear that his obstinate little daughter would refuse a suitor whom she believed was chosen for her and not by her. In the conspiracy that had at last brought about the engagement of Victoria Louise with the future Duke of Brunswick, the Crown Princess had played a prominent part, and she had been the good fairy, thanks to whom the young people had grown to understand each other and to discover that they could only be happy if permitted to marry.

Altogether the years which followed upon the Dantzig incident were perhaps the happiest in the married life of the Crown Princess of Germany, and she was to look back upon them with a certain tender satisfaction, remembering that it was the only time when she had been able more or less to do what she liked, and when she had not been subjected to her husband's tyranny, as heretofore. The Crown Prince and she had met in Berlin three or four months after Cecile's triumphant return to the capital, and both tacitly avoided any reference to the events that had brought about their temporary separation. Frederick William was of course furious with his wife, but the Kaiser had made it a point to speak a few words of hard truth

178 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

to him, so that he had no choice but to obey his father's commands, and to show at least in public some degree of politeness and deference for the Crown Princess. They were just then very much in evidence before the public, because it had been decided by the Emperor that they were to entertain on a greater scale than they had done hitherto, and he allowed them a large sum of money for the purpose. People who knew the Kaiser well said at the time that he wished to see his son take his proper place in society and fill it as it had never been filled before. He wished him also to acquire better manners and to lose some of that arrogance which was one of the most prominent traits of his altogether unpleasant character, and he thought that knowledge and experience of the world might bring about this much-desired change. Cecile on her side was fond of entertaining, and she had very naturally fallen into the position of leader of Berlin society, a position her mother-in-law was no longer able to hold on account of her failing health and her lack of taste for the festivities of the gay world that looked to her for its amusement and pleasures. The Crown Princess had become virtually, if not nominally, the first lady in the land,

and she liked it. On the other hand, people had grown fond of her and admired her pleasant, smiling, amiable face, and the great dignity of her whole demeanour. As for the Royal family, they respected her and felt thankful to her for having controlled her feelings and been wise enough to overlook her husband's iniquities. Altogether her position had grown quite tolerable and even pleasant in certain respects, when suddenly the catastrophe took place which was to change the face of the world as well as the whole future life of Cecile of Mecklenburg and transform her from the heiress of a great throne into an outcast, drifting alone on the ocean of existence, and deprived of status, name, fortune, and all that she had enjoyed for more than fourteen years.

CHAPTER XIX

ROYALTY'S LAST PAGEANT

THE 24th of May of the year 1914 was a great day in Berlin. On that date were celebrated the nuptials of the only daughter of the Kaiser with the son of the Duke of Cumberland, the dispossessed pretender to the Hanoverian throne. In honour of the occasion most of the Sovereigns of Europe had assembled, among others the King and Queen of England and the Czar of Russia, who were closely allied to the bride and bridegroom, the latter's mother, Duchess Thyra of Cumberland, being the youngest sister of the widowed Queen Alexandra and of the Dowager Empress Marie of Russia. Everything that could be devised in honour of the occasion had been done to add to its pomp and solemnity, and it was really the day of the supreme triumph of the Kaiser, who saw himself playing host to the two mightiest monarchs in the world and receiving them together at his court. The presents showered on the bride were of fabulous value



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

THE DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW OF THE EX-KAISER
(THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF BRUNSWICK)



and comprised, among other things, the family stones of the Dukes of Brunswick which had been confiscated by Prussia when it had conquered Hanover, and which had reposed in a safe in Berlin until they were taken out and offered as a wedding gift to the Princess Victoria Louisa. Among them was a diamond tiara, which was considered one of the handsomest in the world, and which had formed a part of the dowry of the unfortunate Queen Sophy Dorothy of Hanover, who had ended her days, a lonely prisoner, in the castle of Ahlden in Prussia. Some of its stones had been brought over from France to Germany by the Queen's mother, this lovely Eleonore d'Olbreuse who had won the heart of the Duke of Zell and been raised by him to the rank of his Duchess, in spite of the violent opposition of his whole family. Then there were the famous pearls that had once belonged to Queen Charlotte of England, the consort of George III, which had caused such distress of mind to Queen Victoria because, on the accession of the Duke of Cumberland to the throne of Hanover, the law had allowed him to take them with him to his German kingdom. The Queen had been of the opinion that these pearls ought to remain in England, and be added to the

182 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

jewels owned by the British Crown. But the courts of law before which her uncle had carried the litigation had given a verdict in his favour, and, much to the mortification of the English Sovereign, the celebrated pearls had gone out of her possession, which was the more bitter that in the first year or two of her reign she had often worn them and openly spoken of her affection for them. When the Prussians had invaded Hanover in 1866 Queen Marie had hastily fled to Vienna, taking the pearls with her hidden under her dress, and she had put them on upon every occasion that she was expected to wear evening dress. When her only son, the Duke of Cumberland, had been wedded to the Princess Thyra of Denmark, the pearls of Queen Charlotte had been given to her, and now she offered them in her turn to her son's bride, much to the joy of the Kaiser, who was always pleased when a handsome present was made to his beloved daughter. He himself had showered splendid gifts upon her, and for months before her marriage had spent hours in consultation with his Court jewellers in regard to the ornaments which he should present to her. Indeed, he would have liked nothing better than to have given her some of the Crown Jewels, but there

the Crown Prince had interfered and warned his father that he had not the right to dispose of the heirlooms of the Hohenzollerns even in favour of a Princess of that House. The Prince had never cared for the marriage which his sister was contracting, and angry discussions between them had taken place in regard to it, discussions out of which Princess Victoria Louise had of course emerged triumphant.

Czar Nicholas II had also brought lovely things from St. Petersburg, which he presented to both the bride and bridegroom, and rumour, which is always busy when Royal weddings are celebrated, would have it that his presents had a value of nearly one million German marks. Altogether the magnificence displayed by everybody on this memorable occasion was a thing to be remembered, especially when one takes into consideration that the festivities in honour of this marriage were the last which were held in the old Royal Castle of Berlin, as well as the last at which the Kaiser and the Czar were to take part. In that sense they proved the end of an era, and the final word in a chapter of the history of the world.

No one among the Royal and Imperial person-

184 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

ages who surrounded the only daughter of William II on her bridal morning had any inkling of what was to follow upon these nuptials in the short space of a few months. The speeches made at the wedding supper all spoke of peace and joy and all kinds of good things which people seemed to be confident would follow upon this alliance of the Guelphs and Hohenzollerns, and none of the fair ladies who displayed all their finery with such pleasure ever thought that for them, too, the curtain was about to fall upon their social triumphs, their social successes, and their exalted social positions. Not one human being among the crowds who filled the rooms of the ancient residence of the Prussian Kings had the slightest forewarning that the nice comfortable world in which they lived was about to disappear for ever and ever.

The Kaiser had wished his daughter to have quite an exceptional trousseau and he had assigned the sum of two millions for the purpose of supplying her with clothes, jewels and silver. The Kaiserin, always patriotic in everything that she did, had insisted on this money being spent in Germany, and had proceeded to give abundant orders to several large firms in Berlin, Breslau and Frankfurt, in

regard to her daughter's dresses and linen. But, partly through the influence of the Crown Princess, who in spite of the opposition she had met with had remained faithful to her Parisian milliners and tailors, Victoria Louisa had quite made up her mind to get Paquin and Doucet, not to mention more modern houses recently become the fashion, to create for her some wonders in the way of underwear and ball dresses. The Empress, true to the traditions of her own childhood and youth, had insisted on the Princess's lingerie being manufactured out of the finest batiste and nainsook, but Victoria Louise meant to get some of these articles made out of crêpe de chine and satin, abundantly trimmed with lace and embroidery, and with the help of the Crown Princess she had persuaded her father to allow her to order some garments of that kind, unknown to her mother. She had even extracted from him a handsome sum in order to be enabled to do it. The dainty little things arrived in due course at the Palace, and the Kaiserin almost fainted away when she discovered her daughter unpacking them with a delight which only added to her own indignation. She immediately accused Princess Cecile of having put into her sister-in-law's head the idea

186 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of such garments, which, as she indignantly declared, were only fit for ladies of renowned beauty and doubtful reputation, and ever since that time her relations with the Crown Princess remained strained, not to say hostile. During the numerous balls, dinners, concerts, and State performances at the Opera which had enlivened the days of the Royal guests who had come to grace with their presence this wedding of such unsurpassable interest, it had been noticed that the Crown Princess looked pale and almost worn, and that there were dark circles under her eyes that spoke of great fatigue or considerable anxiety. The fact was that Cecile was feeling keenly the impending separation between her and her sister-in-law, and that, besides, she had been frightened by certain remarks made by her husband, remarks which seemed to indicate that he expected grave events to break out almost immediately after the nuptials of his sister. Now these events could only be of one kind, because war was practically the only thing which interested him, a war in the course of which he could win the laurels he was always thinking of, and which he reckoned were absolutely bound, sooner or later, to come within his reach. Cecile had heard from various

sources that enormous preparations were being made by Germany for this war, which the General Staff seemed to think unavoidable, and she felt an intense revolt shake her whole being when she listened to the professions of friendship and devotion which were showered upon the Czar by her father-in-law, who, she knew for a fact, was all the time thinking of the day when he would be able to draw the sword against him and destroy him and his realm.

But all the while she had to keep still and not say a word. She was the Crown Princess of Germany, and as such she had lost the right to warn even her own blood relations of all that was being planned against them; she had to go about smiling whilst her heart was racked with the thought that she was playing a hateful comedy, and that she was lending herself to what she knew but too well was going to be the greatest perfidy ever recorded in history.

When the Czar came to wish her good-bye previous to his return to St. Petersburg, she could not restrain herself, and when he kissed her hand she whispered into his ear the one word "Beware." Nicholas II did not understand her, and exclaimed

188 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

in surprise: "Beware? of whom, and of what? What do you mean?" The reply was heard by the Crown Prince, who upbraided his wife with great violence, telling her that she ought to remember who she was and the position she occupied, and the Kaiser, to whom the matter was referred, also scolded her for her intemperance of language, adding that it was not her place to judge what was being done by his own orders, that the fact of adding to Germany's armaments did not mean that Germany was about to go to war, and that even if she were compelled to do so, she certainly would not attack Russia, with whose Imperial family the Hohenzollerns were so intimately connected. Cecile did not reply. She had her own ideas on that subject, but she knew herself to be so entirely powerless that it was of no use to protest against what she could neither help nor prevent. The poor woman was already feeling the approach of the storm of which she was to become one of the most pathetic and innocent victims.

CHAPTER XX

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

THE marriage of the young Duchess of Brunswick was, though she knew it not, the last great official occasion upon which Cecile of Mecklenburg was to appear before the public as the Consort of the Heir Apparent to the German Throne. The winter which followed upon it did not see her in Berlin for any length of time, though she gave one or two entertainments in her Palace there, but it was evident that she was out of sorts, and greatly worried by something. Busybodies who make it a point of knowing everything assured each other that she was troubled about her husband, the Crown Prince being then engaged in one of the numerous love intrigues which seemed to please him so much; and they pitied her and said that it was very sad that such a nice little woman should be so shamefully neglected by the one man who ought to appreciate her and her charm and virtues. But it was not the conduct of her consort which tormented the

190 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Crown Princess; she had grown used to his mode of living, and she despised him so completely that nothing he might do could affect her. There were other preoccupations which filled her days and her nights with anxiety and apprehension, preoccupations of a political nature that caused her to tremble for the future of her children, those boys born to such brilliant destinies who were to lose all that they ought to have possessed.

Events were to prove that the Crown Princess had not been mistaken in her fears in regard to what lay in store for her and for her family. War broke out, or rather was declared by Germany, without the least provocation on the part of the people on whom she threw herself like a ravenous wolf in quest of prey. Amidst the greatest excitement Berlin had ever known, the Kaiser made his famous speech to his people, in which he declared that he would no longer consider political parties but look upon all his subjects as united Germans. The crowds, always fickle and apt to be led by false enthusiasm, cheered him vociferously, and then started towards the Palace of the Crown Prince to renew there their manifestations of so-called loyalty to that House of Hohenzollern from whom it was

just then expecting so many great things and deeds. Cecile had to show herself pale and trembling to the multitude that acclaimed her with immense enthusiasm. Her own heart was breaking, but she played the game, and the old blood of the Romanoffs asserted itself once more in the dignity with which she bore herself in those trying hours.

It must not be forgotten that the Crown Princess had been brought up in France; that she had enjoyed in that country the most generous of hospitalities, and that she was closely connected with the Russian Imperial House. It is easy, therefore, to imagine her feelings when she found herself the official enemy of all those whom she had loved and respected. Even her relations with her own mother (which had been so difficult to maintain because of the Kaiser's dislike for the Grand Duchess Anastasia) were about to be severed, because the latter had immediately declared that she renounced her title, position and income as widowed Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, and would henceforth only consider and call herself a Princess of the Imperial House of Romanoff. This meant that Cecile could not whilst the war lasted even write to her, far less

192 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

see her. It may be imagined how painful this must have been for her.

During those first few days which followed upon the declaration of war, small incidents occurred almost continually to remind her of her complete helplessness. For instance, when the Dowager Empress of Russia was stopped in Berlin, on her way back from England to St. Petersburg, the Crown Princess implored the Kaiser to permit her to go and greet her aunt and put herself at her disposal during the trying hours which she had to spend in the German capital. The Emperor, who from the very beginning of the war had hoped to persuade the Czar to conclude with him a separate peace, did not object, and graciously signified his consent. But the Crown Prince, when he heard of it, absolutely forbade his wife to go to the Silesian Railroad station where the train of the Dowager Empress was detained, and in order to be sure that she would obey him, he locked her up in her bedroom and only released her after he heard that Marie Feodorowna had left Berlin. This was hard enough to bear, but Cecile was to be reminded of her utter helplessness in a far more bitter manner. Her own cousin, Princess Irene of Russia, the only daughter

of her mother's younger brother, the Grand Duke Alexander Michaylowitsch, happened to be in Berlin with her husband, Prince Felix Youssoupoff (who was to acquire such notoriety later on through his shooting of the too famous Raspoutine) and his parents. They were detained by special order of the Kaiser, who wished to keep the whole Yousoupoff family as war prisoners in Germany. Princess Irene telephoned to Cecile, whom she knew, of course, very well, asking her whether she could not come to her help. The Crown Princess at once replied that she would do all she could and would come to see the Youssoupoffs as soon as she had spoken with the Emperor. She fully expected that William II would listen to her entreaties, and accord her the first real favour she had ever asked of him. Great was her surprise and mortification when he answered her that this business did not concern her, and that he would most certainly not change one word of the orders he had issued in regard to the Youssoupoff family. He also told her that if she attempted to go and see them, he would have her dragged out of her carriage, even if he had to resort to violence. Cecile could only sadly inform the Princess Irene by telephone that

194 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

she could do nothing for her; but at the same time she contrived to inform the Spanish Ambassador of her cousin's plight and he managed to secure for the latter and for her relatives the necessary authorisation to leave the German capital in the same train which carried off to the Danish frontier the Russian Ambassador, Mr. Swerbeieff, and his staff. Happily for the poor Crown Princess, her family never suspected what she had done, otherwise trouble of a most serious nature would have ensued for her. She had not the right to show herself compassionate, even in regard to her own people, and the Crown Prince as well as the Emperor were determined that she should know it.

This is not a story of the war. It is therefore useless to speak about it, except in so far as it affected the life of the Crown Princess of Germany, whose position became so trying that sometimes she prayed to God to take her out of a life which had proved so bitter for her. She bore herself with great tact, effaced herself entirely before the Kaiserin, who immediately took in hand the direction of the Red Cross; and though she visited hospitals and wards where wounded soldiers were being treated, she avoided making any public appearance which might

have drawn on her person the attention of the crowds, which she avoided as much as she could. Her conduct was quite irreproachable, but it did not please the German people nor the Hohenzollern family, with whom she became extremely unpopular, and who accused her of being at heart "a Russian" instead of the German Hausfrau, whom she was supposed to personify. They could not forgive her for her intervention in favour of some French and Russian prisoners of war who had been shamefully ill-treated and who, thanks to her efforts, were at last transferred to another concentration camp, the commander of which proved to be a more humane man than the officer under whose supervision they had spent the first months of their captivity. And one of her sisters-in-law, the Princess Eitel Fritz, having caught her one day in tears as a consequence of having read in some newspaper an account of that terrible battle of Tanneberg where over two hundred thousand Russians perished in one day, drowned by Hindenburg in the Mazurian lakes and marshes, went about saying that Cecile spent her time weeping over the misfortunes of the enemies of Germany, and that she did not care in the very least for her own com-

196 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

patriots or for what they suffered. Of course this was a libel, but then sometimes the judgment of history also is founded on libel, and it certainly played a great part in all the events that were to follow, and that ended in the Crown Princess at last making up her mind to try to win back her liberty and bring against her husband the action for divorce she had wished to begin so many years before.

When the Crown Prince left for the front, his wife with their two eldest boys accompanied him to the railroad station. The children were wildly excited and the Prince himself quite nervous with suppressed emotion. He was so entirely carried away by his feelings that for once he forgot to make some disagreeable remark to Cecile, but took leave of her with affection, going so far as to take her in his arms and kiss her in a demonstrative manner before the crowds gathered on the platform of the station to see him take his departure. He did not return to Berlin for two years, not even when his youngest child and first little girl was born, but the rumours of the kind of life he was leading reached the ears of his unfortunate wife and proved to her once more that she was outraged and betrayed at every



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

THE EX-KAISERIN, THE EX-CROWN PRINCESS
AND HER LITTLE DAUGHTER



step. She realised more than ever that she had ceased to count in the life of this man who, even in presence of danger, of death, and of all the other horrors of war, had but one thought, namely, to amuse himself in the most disreputable manner possible, in company with his officers and in the presence of his soldiers, to whom he conveyed the impression that nothing was sacred for him, and that he treated family ties as well as all the other decencies of life with equal indifference.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FALL OF THE COLOSSUS

THE war dragged on through three weary years, and at the expiration of that time the end still seemed as far off as ever. The Crown Prince, after the failure of his attacks on Verdun, had come back to Berlin for a few days, where angry scenes took place between him and his wife. Cecile by that time had had her eyes opened as to the aims of "*Kultur*," as the Germans understood it, and she received her husband with feelings of disgust, combined with contempt. Apart from his private conduct, about which too many rumours had reached her to leave her any illusions as to the moral worth of a man who, to all his other defects, had added that of cowardice, she had been too profoundly shocked by the cruelties and atrocities practised by the German armies in the field not to speak openly about what she thought concerning the brutality with which the war was conducted. Had she been free to do what she liked she would most probably

have gone abroad to some neutral country—Spain, Sweden or Switzerland—and remained there until the storm had blown over; but of course she would not have been allowed to do this as it would have been tantamount to a desertion of the sacred cause of which she was supposed to be one of the most prominent representatives. So she had to school herself to bear in silence the burden which had been placed upon her shoulders, the weight of which oppressed her so much, and to keep still whilst her soul yearned to cry out its agony. She did the little she could to help the victims of the war in other countries than Germany, but she worked in silence, and never spoke of her attempts to relieve the misery of her neighbours.

One day the news was brought to her of the atrocious execution of Miss Edith Cavell, which stirred her profoundly. In her indignation she was about to cast prudence to the winds and write to the Kaiser, who was then at headquarters, to express her revolt and indignation at the foul deed, when a letter was put into her hands. It bore a Swiss post-mark, and contained only a few words: "Two other women, the Countess de Belleville, and a school-teacher, Mademoiselle Thullier, have been

200 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

sentenced to death together with Miss Cavell. So far they have not been executed. Won't you, in remembrance of the Sphinx, make an effort to save their lives?"

This was all. There was no signature and no indication as to who could have penned this strange epistle, but Cecile did not need to ask the writer's name. She knew but too well who he was, and she experienced a strange pleasure in thinking that at least he was in Europe and near enough to be able to reach her, if she ever found herself in danger—which sooner or later would probably be her fate. She immediately sat down, and, instead of writing an angry letter to her father-in-law, she penned a humble and imploring epistle, begging of him to grant her the lives of these two women as a reward for what she had had to endure at the hands of the Crown Prince, and ending with the words: "I have never asked you for anything since this iniquitous war began, but now I entreat you to let feelings of mercy take the upper hand of what you and others consider justice, but which I fear the civilised world will term murder, and not to send these two ladies to their death. There has been already so much blood spilt that surely the shedding of this innocent

blood could be avoided. Please, please consider my request, and do not refuse it, if you really care for me as you have so often said you did."

For once the heart of William II was touched, and the Countess of Belleville and Mlle. Thullier had their sentences commuted to long terms of imprisonment. The appeal of the Crown Princess' friend had not been made in vain.

Then, at last, occurred the expected collapse. The vast war machine which Germany had taken so much trouble to build up fell down and broke into small pieces. A wave of revolution swept the country, just as it had swept over Russia, and the German Empire disappeared from the map of Europe, carrying away amidst its ruins the proud dynasty of the Hohenzollerns.

The Crown Princess was not at all surprised. She had expected something of the kind; still, the abdication of her father-in-law came as a shock to her. She had not believed that he would throw up the game instead of playing it to the bitter end. She had thought that he would commit suicide rather than surrender. Now she found that he even lacked sufficient dignity and courage to put an end to himself, and that he preferred exile in Holland to the

202 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

grave in which his reputation in history had already been buried. For her, with the blood of the Romanoffs running in her veins, it appeared incredible. When her cousin the Czar had given up his crown, she had only pitied him, because his weakness of character was well known to her, but the Kaiser had appeared as a strong man in her eyes, and she had not imagined he would not try to resist the waves of the current that had swept away most of the European dynasties. Of the Crown Prince she never thought at all, she had never expected he would die "game to the last," and besides, his actions had become absolutely indifferent to her. But as regards the Kaiser, she had still nursed some illusions, and the idea that he would not give a thought as to what would become of his family, children and grandchildren had never occurred to her.

She remained in Potsdam all through the first dark days of the Revolution. No one interfered with her, and she was left quite alone in the Marble Palace, as it was called, with her children, most of her attendants having forsaken her at the first symptoms of the coming storm. The Kaiserin, who it seems was the only person who had been aware of the intentions of William II, was busy

packing as many of her things as she could, in the way of jewels, plate, furs, laces, and other precious possessions, in order to take them away with her. The greater part of the Crown Jewels had already been put into a place of safety abroad, or confided to the care of the Queen of Sweden, the first cousin of William II, who happened to be in Carlsruhe with her mother, the Dowager Grand Duchess of Baden, when the armistice was signed, and who had gladly accepted the mission of taking care of her relatives' diamonds and pearls. But there were many other things which the conservative German spirit of the last German Empress refused to leave to the people who would occupy the place which had been hers for so many years. She consequently set to work to pack up all that she thought she might carry away without arousing the suspicions of the representatives of the new German government, who of course would claim as its own most of the fortune of its former rulers. The placid temperament of Augusta Victoria did not go further than the necessity to save all that could be saved, in the material sense of that word, of the many treasures which had owned her for their mistress; and the loss of her throne had not affected

204 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

her so much as the possible and eventual loss of her wardrobe. When her daughters-in-law crowded around her, and tried to offer her their sympathy, she met their advances quietly, but had plainly indicated in doing so that she preferred being left to herself, and even the sight of her little grandson, the eldest child of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, had failed to move her. She did not seem to realise that this unexpected Revolution which had broken out so suddenly had robbed him of the throne to which he had been born.

Cecile of Mecklenburg, on the contrary, took that phase of the question most acutely to heart. For herself she did not care, but rather felt relieved at the thought that considerations of rank would no longer compel her to go on playing a comedy which had become so irksome to her. But the thought of her children, deprived of their birth-right, was a very bitter one for her maternal heart. She tried to explain to them the gravity of the events which were taking place, but she understood very well how difficult it would be for their young minds to grasp that after having been so much the Hohenzollerns had sunk deeper than they had ever been able to rise in the days gone by.

Prompted by her duty, however, she suggested to the Crown Prince that she should join him in Holland at the time that the Kaiserin took her departure from Potsdam for that lonely castle of Amerongen near Utrecht, where William II had found a refuge. But Frederick William did not care in the least to see his wife again; in fact, her presence in the place of exile where he had been sent might seriously interfere with many of his pleasures. He therefore telegraphed to her that she had better stay where she was, and that he did not want her to join him. And at about that same time, he wrote to an important firm of radical lawyers in Berlin asking them whether they could not possibly arrange matters so as to procure him a divorce from his wife.

The former Crown Princess knew nothing of all this. She bravely accepted the change which had taken place in her destiny, and tried to shape her life in accordance with it. She summoned her household and told them that the hour had come when they must part, thanking them for their past services, and distributing among them small souvenirs in remembrance of the years which they had spent with her. Then she proceeded to introduce several

206 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

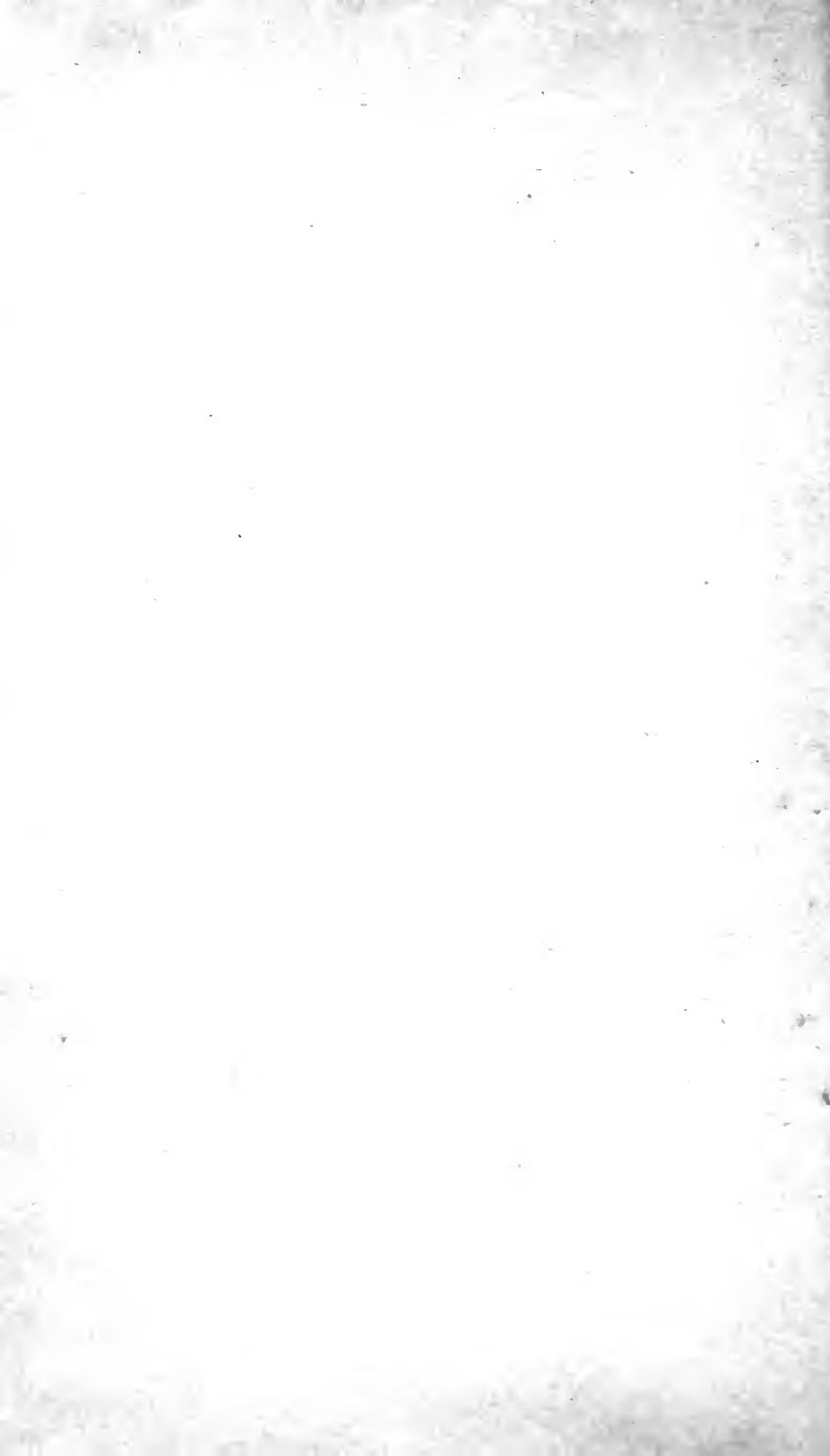
changes in her manner of living, sold her horses, carriages and motorcars, dispensed with two out of the three tutors and governesses of her children, of whose studies she herself assumed the direction, and she even dismissed some of her personal maids. Most of her splendid gowns she sold, and sent the money to the Red Cross. Her jewels she retained as a last resource against poverty in the future. And after that she waited, for what she knew not yet, but felt convinced that nothing could be worse than the past, that past which had seemed so brilliant, and which had contained so much sorrow. She knew that her old life was over, but she did not yet dare to think what the new one would be nor of what it had in store for her and for her children.



THE EMPRESS FREDERICK
(MOTHER OF THE EX-KAISER)



THE EMPEROR FREDERICK III
(FATHER OF THE EX-KAISER)



CHAPTER XXII

THE NECESSITY OF RESIGNATION

It was a sad and austere life that the woman who had believed at one time that she would become the Empress of one of the greatest countries in Europe found herself compelled to lead. In the first moment she felt quite bewildered at the change which had taken place in her destiny, and she could hardly realise that the future would require almost superhuman efforts on her part to be endurable. Her personal attendants had from the first day of the Revolution left her under some pretext or other, or else had been, as I have already related, dismissed by her. She understood that in the critical position in which she was placed she ought not to attract attention to her person or her doings, and that the fewer people she kept around her the less she was in danger of becoming the subject of gossip. But she could not prevent certain monarchist leaders from conspiring against the new government that had assumed the task of liquidating the errors of the

208 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

Hohenzollerns and from associating her name and that of her children with their conspiracies. The staunchest Junkers had lost every hope of seeing William II return to Germany. His ignominious flight had made it impossible; and as for the Crown Prince, he was so generally despised that his name did not once come up during the several meetings of the old Conservative party in Prussia. He had made himself entirely impossible, and apart from his want of moral backbone he was not intelligent enough to be able to rally around him the few adherents of the old German monarchical principles still left in Prussia. His children were there, however, and it was upon his eldest boy that the hopes of these people rested. He might be brought up according to the new ideas which would henceforth preside at the destinies of the nation whose arrogance had brought about the greatest calamity the world had ever known, and whose humiliation had even surpassed this arrogance; and if only his mother would lend herself to the plans in which he was to become concerned, there might still be left some chances for the Hohenzollerns to maintain themselves in their former position. That this hope existed is proved by a speech made during a politi-

cal meeting of the Monarchist party which was held about the beginning of the year 1919 in Bonn, when one of the leaders of this party expressed regret that the Kaiser had been so badly advised as to fly to Holland instead of remaining with his people. "Had he done so," declared this gentleman, "it would have been better for him, for his House, and for our Fatherland!"

Remaining with his people would, however, have required a courage and strength of mind which William II did not possess. To lament his destiny and intrigue against the new rulers of the country which he had led to its ruin was easy for him, but to play the game would have been impossible to his shallow, cruel, dishonest character. His daughter-in-law was better aware of it than any one else, and this was one of the reasons why she refused to countenance any efforts to use her children as pawns in the dangerous chess match which had been started by those who still nursed the hope of picking up what was left of this old régime that had crumbled into such complete ruin.

Nevertheless, she consented to receive the different political men who craved her permission to discuss with her the conditions under which Germany

210 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

would have to find her way in the future. She also tried, whilst arranging her daily existence on strictly economical lines, to save what could be saved of the personal fortune of her sons. She wished and hoped at this particular period of her new existence to bring them up as private individuals in their own country, and not to make exiles and outcasts out of them. This was the reason why she determined to remain in Potsdam as long as she was allowed to do so. Her first impulse had been to rent some small villa or cottage in the country far from the scenes of her former splendour. But she was told that if she did this, the attention of the public would be awakened, and that this might bring about unpleasant consequences. The very removal of her private property from the Marble Palace in Potsdam, and from the one which she had occupied in Berlin, would be sure to give rise to all kinds of comments, and lead to accusations that she was taking away some of the property belonging to the State, and in the excited condition of the public mind every occasion for it to find a pretext of breaking out into riots or mutiny ought to be avoided. Personally the Crown Princess was respected by all parties, and she had no cause to fear any insult from the

The Necessity of Resignation 211

mob or any annoyances from the new government. Cecile had to acknowledge that those who advised her in that sense were right, and she frankly said so to the newly appointed President of the German Republic, Mr. Ebert, when he called upon her to discuss different financial questions that required to be settled, before she could decide at last what she could do, and where she might be able to take up her residence for the future.

These interviews which she had with the head of the country over which she had once thought that she would rule were of course painful for the former Crown Princess, but she did not shirk them. On the contrary, she spoke with him quite frankly as to her prospects, and the system of education which she meant to adopt in the bringing up of her children. Her eldest boy, who had already shown some of the arrogance of his father and grandfather, was of course the great object of her solicitude. She wished him to become an honest and a useful man. Germany, the old Germany that had cheered her on her wedding day, was dead and gone, had disappeared in the tempest it had itself aroused; but a new Germany might arise, desirous of atoning for the crimes of the past, willing to accept with due

212 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

submission the chastisement it deserved. It was for this new Germany that Cecile of Mecklenburg-Schwerin meant to bring up her boys, it was of this new Germany that she wanted them to become citizens.

She did not confide any of her thoughts on this subject to her family. Neither her brothers-in-law nor their wives would have understood her. And communications with her mother were difficult, if not impossible, at least such communications as she would have desired and in which she could have unburdened her weary soul. In her loneliness and misery it was almost a relief for the Princess to be able to talk with a man like Ebert, who had no personal interest in advising her, and who perhaps had some pity for her in his heart.

When the Empress left Potsdam for Amerongen, Cecile drove with her to the station. Augusta started in the early hours of the morning, accompanied only by two or three faithful attendants who had declared that they could not leave her, but would share her exile. It was a strange departure, and very different from any of the journeys which the unhappy woman who was leaving her home and country, probably for ever, had undertaken in for-

The Necessity of Resignation 213

mer days. There was no special train to bear her away, no guard of honour on the platform of the station to play the national anthem; no courtiers massed at the door of her car to wish her God speed; no flowers presented to her by Court officials in gold embroidered uniforms. The only sight which met her weary eyes was that of soldiers in grey coats getting out of the trucks in which they had travelled from the front, who did not even throw a glance at her, and the only man who seemed to trouble about the train in which she was to take her place was the station master, holding a lantern, the faint glare of which guided her steps in the twilight of that winter morning. In spite of the placidity of her temperament, she who a few days before had been the Empress of Germany must have felt the contrast between what was and what had been, but if such was the case she did not show it, and her daughter-in-law looked far more unhappy when they parted and exchanged their last embrace and last good-bye.

Cecile sent away the carriage that had brought her to the station and walked home with a sinking heart. She felt that the last link which had bound her to her former existence had snapped. The new one had to be organised on quite different lines. The

214 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

one great problem that troubled her was whether she would be allowed to carry out this organisation. Vague apprehensions filled her soul for which she could not account, but which weighed heavily on her mind. The problem of the future was daily becoming more complicated and more difficult for her, and she had no one near to help her, or to give her strength to withstand the new sorrows which perhaps awaited her. Something seemed to tell her that she had reached the culminating point of her destiny, and that she stood at the parting of the ways which led to the great unknown.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FRIEND IN NEED

THE Crown Princess would have liked nothing better than to go to Switzerland and join her mother. But she felt that she had not the right to take her children away to a foreign land without their father's consent, unless actually compelled to do so. She therefore wrote to the Crown Prince, asking him for the authorisation which she considered herself morally obliged to obtain from him. She received no reply to this letter except a curt communication from a lawyer asking her to grant him an audience in order to discuss "certain important business matters which her husband has asked him to communicate to her." Much surprised, Cecile fixed an hour for this interview, when she was informed that an action for divorce had been filed against her, on the grounds of her having violated her marriage vows.

This was too much, and the insulted and outraged woman ordered from her presence the bearer of this

216 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

insolent message, declaring at the same time that she would fight the action to the last, and in her turn expose all the indignities she had been subjected to by the miserable creature whom to her sorrow she had married, hoping to find in him a companion and a protector.

But when the lawyer had departed, the Princess, thinking over all that he had told her, gave way to complete despair. She knew herself to be entirely innocent of the accusations hurled against her by an unprincipled man, but the difficulty consisted in proving her innocence. He might find any number of false witnesses ready to swear to a lie, and she was so helpless; she knew so well that with the change which had taken place in her position she would not find one single person willing to help her, or even to advise her as to what lawyer she ought to employ to defend her. Of course she would write to her mother, but the Grand Duchess Anastasia could not come to her, and besides, her presence at her side might only complicate matters. Cecile was so disgusted that had it not been for her children she would most certainly have tried to get away into another country and leave the Crown Prince to do what he liked. But there were her

sons and daughters to think of. She had to defend herself for their sakes; they could not be allowed to go through life thinking of their mother as a vile woman. These small mites were also friendless but for her; if she did not care for them no one else would, and even if they could join their father, it would only be for their moral ruin, for what kind of an education could they receive from a man who did not hesitate to calumniate his own wife? Cecile was perfectly well aware that the Crown Prince wanted to get rid of her in order to be free to live his own life in company with the low creatures whom he had made his friends; and the thought that her sons might also be brought later on into contact with these same people was well-nigh intolerable to her. The great question, however, was what she was going to do, and what in general she could do.

She spent a sleepless night and rose in the morning with all manner of wild ideas floating through her brain, one of which was to apply to the new government for protection. But she soon realised that this was impossible as it would only be a lowering of her personal dignity and would avail her nothing because she would probably be told that she ought to consult a lawyer rather than trouble

218 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

the new administration with the story of her personal wrongs and woes. Her brothers-in-law were worse than useless as they would most certainly have sided with the Crown Prince; her own brother was in exile, she did not even know where; the only resource she could think of was her mother, and finally she decided to seek her aid.

At this point in her meditations a servant entered the room and told her that a strange gentleman, to all appearance a foreigner, asked to be received by her. Cecile imagined that it might be another messenger from the Crown Prince and ordered that he be shown in. To her stupefaction there appeared her American friend of bygone days, the man from whom she had parted under the shadow of the great Sphinx, a few years before, and whom she had never expected to see again.

"You, you!" she gasped.

"Yes, it is I," he replied, "did you think that I had forgotten you?"

The Princess remained speechless, but two great tears fell down her cheeks as she put out both her hands towards this friend who had thus suddenly appeared in the hour of her need.

"I told you that if the day should ever come when

you might require me, I would be there," he said. "I know all, and I have come here to see what can be done for you. I have come to claim that friendship which you offered me the last time we were together, and which I was then compelled to refuse for your sake. Will you give it to me now?"

He drew her towards him, and for the first time in her life Cecile could lay her head against the shoulder of the man of whom she had thought so much, and whose remembrance had filled her soul for so many long years. She could at last weep in his arms, and it seemed a relief to be able to shed those burning tears that had scalded her eyes so often, when she had been compelled to suppress them, and to swallow them with a breaking heart. She forgot everything in that moment of supreme ecstasy: the danger in which she stood, her husband's infamy, the loss of her great position, and the uncertainty of her future. She only realised that at last she would be defended and protected by a strong and brave man, as strong and as brave as the country whence he came.

It was not difficult for him to persuade her after that to communicate with lawyers of great ability whom he brought to her, and who accepted the task

220 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

of defending her, and of beginning in her name another action, also for divorce, against the Crown Prince. His conduct towards her had been so notorious that there was no doubt she could obtain a verdict in her favour, together with the custody of her children. She was no longer the Crown Princess of Germany; she was plain Mrs. Frederick William Hohenzollern, and as such she had the right to appeal to the protection of the laws of the country of which she had become a simple citizen. These would not fail her, and she might reasonably hope for the freedom which all that she had endured and suffered in the past had given her the right to claim.

All this took some time to settle and to arrange, and then the Princess's friend once more came to her.

"I must now bid you good-bye," he said. "I leave you in good hands and my presence here is no longer necessary. When all is over I shall come back."

She looked at him reproachfully.

"Are you really going away?" she enquired. "I thought we had done with all this nonsense; I hoped you would remain here until I became free. Who

is to advise me, and to help me when you are gone?"

"You will have people to help you," he replied. "I have arranged all that. But don't you understand that now, particularly, you have to be more careful than you have ever been. My presence here would only compromise you and give your enemies the opportunity which they seek to injure and to libel you. I must go because I love you so well, and you must not prevent me from doing so. But I shall come back, and then . . . then, Cecile . . ." He opened his arms, and she flew into them, happy at last.

"My children, my children . . ." she murmured.

"They will be my children also," he said gravely. "Cecile, you will not fail me this time? I have waited for you so long."

"No, I shall not fail you," she replied, and there were tears in her voice. "I shall never fail you."

He bent down and kissed her brow; then quietly left the room, and Berlin the next day.

The girl who had been the Crown Princess of Germany was alone once more, and yet not alone, because she knew that there existed in the world a true heart who would remain faithful to her. She

222 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

accepted the separation with calm dignity, and she set herself to live the kind of existence he would approve of, the kind of life he would like her to lead. She went through all the unpleasant duties with which she saw herself confronted; she appealed to the law to free her from the moral monster to whom she was bound; she bravely submitted to the many disagreeable consequences of the line of action she had so resolutely adopted. She submitted to the cross-questioning of inquisitive judges, eager to hear the details of her domestic life with the former heir to the German empire. She thought only about her children, whom she was determined never to forsake. And when she was alone in the evening, in her own room, she would sit down by the window, and think of the new country she would go to one day, to that great country where every man was free, and where there existed brave, splendid fellows like that friend of hers who had appeared in the hour of her need. She looked eagerly towards the future—a future when she would know peace and rest; and the image of a small house on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, a photograph of which she had seen, would rise before her weary eyes, and she would see herself sitting on that white

terrace, looking at the blue waves, beside a man whose earnest, grey eyes were tenderly looking into hers. Many months must elapse before she could be there, but they had somehow to be lived through and to be endured, and she did not rebel. She had found at last what was far better than her former rank, than the jewels with which she had been loaded, and the splendour and pomp that had surrounded her; she had found the secret of happiness.

We leave her thus, staring at the stars in the brilliant moon-lit skies and contemplating, perhaps for the last time, the flowers and orange trees that ornament the gardens and parks of this Potsdam where she had believed that she would one day rule. Everything that had been a part of her former life had crumbled to pieces around her; all the magnificence amidst which she had moved had vanished and disappeared. The ruin was complete, but it had not claimed her as one of its victims. She had emerged out of it a new woman about to begin a new life in a new country. The Crown Princess of Germany was no more, but Cecile of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was thinking with pride and with an eager

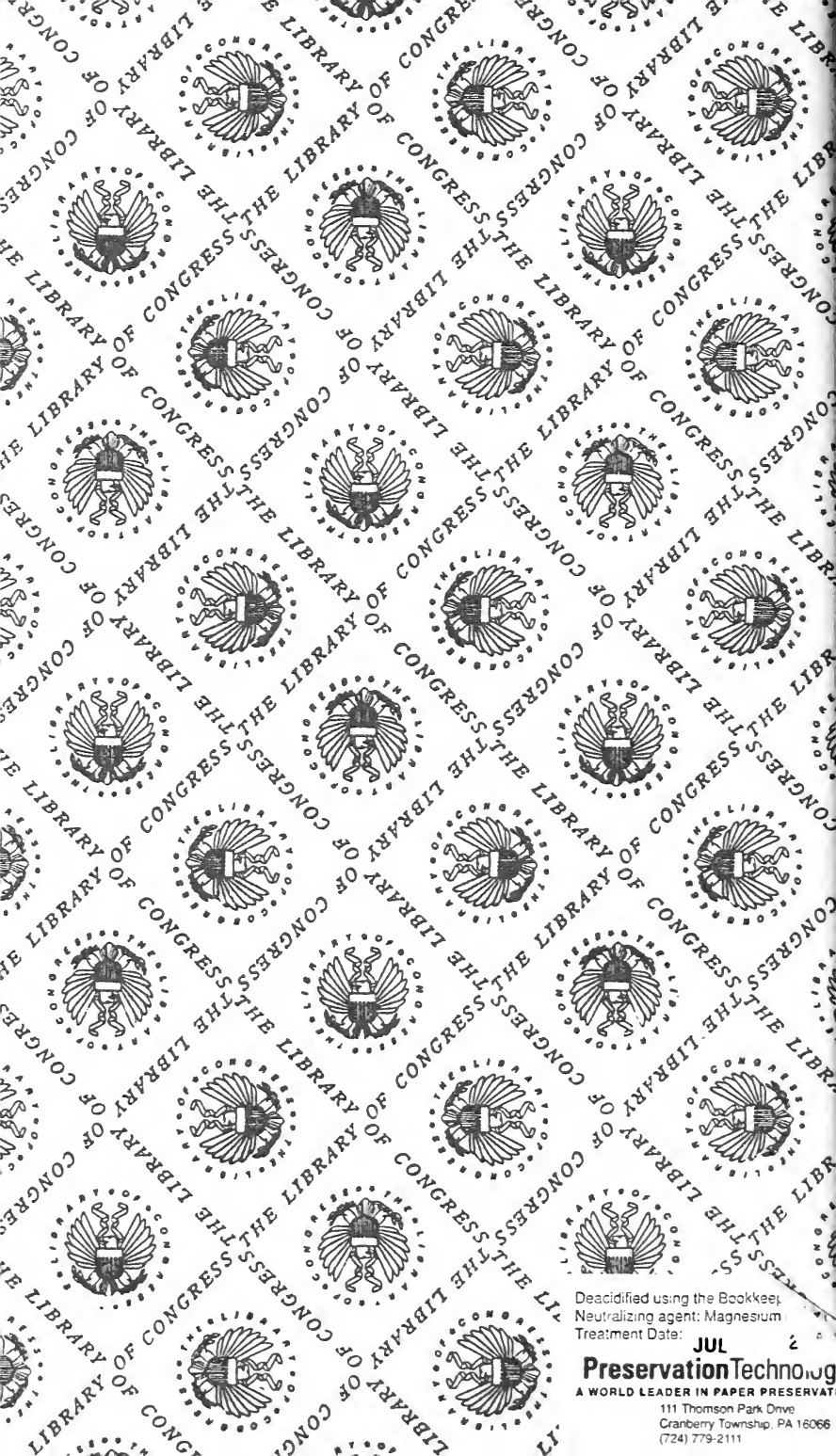
224 The Disillusions of a Crown Princess

joy of the day when she would be at last plain Mrs. . . . But it is still too early to tell the reader the name under which this daughter of Emperors will be known in the near future.

THE END

H 16 89





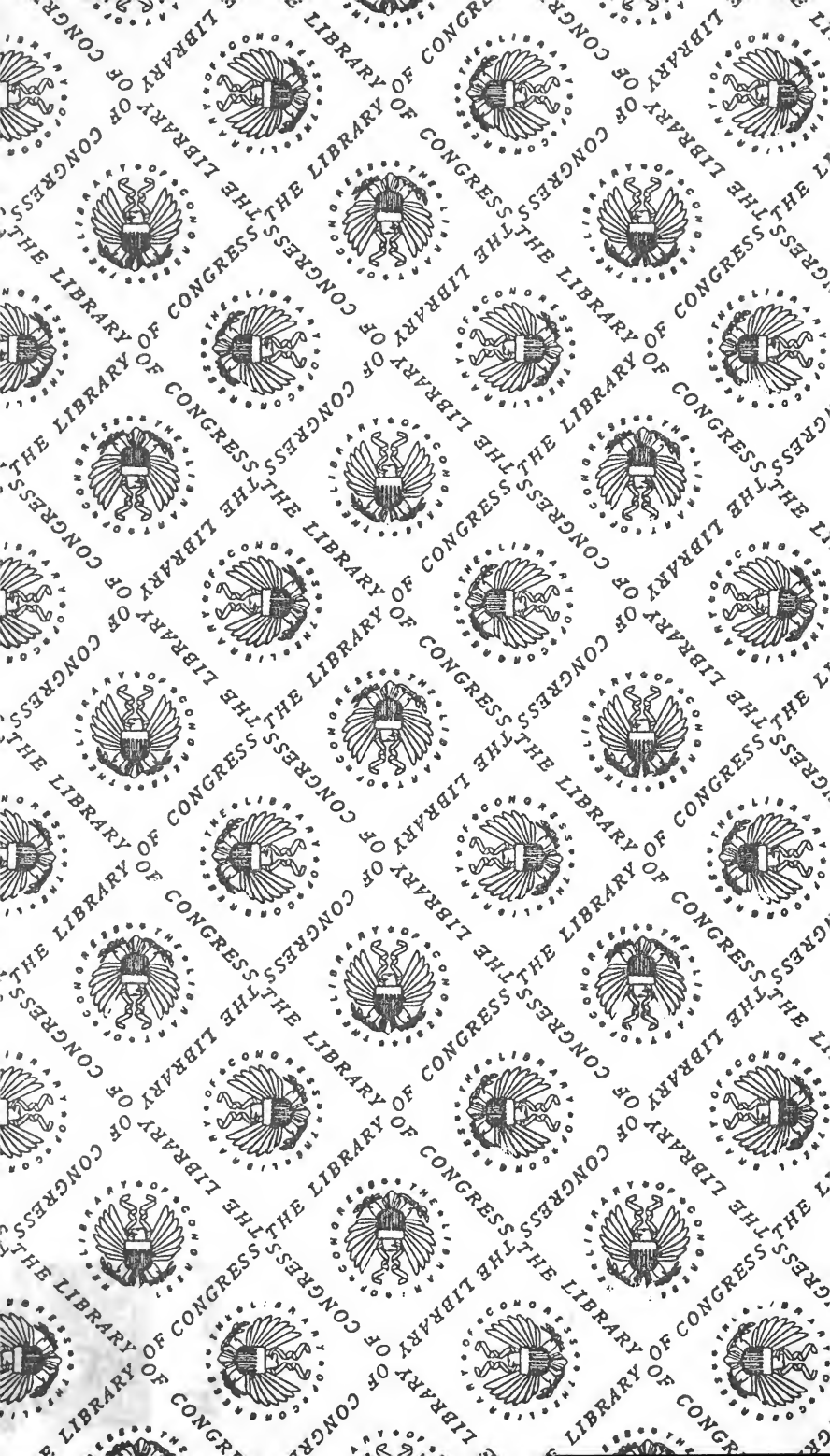
Deacidified using the Bookkeeper
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium
Treatment Date:

JUL

Preservation Technology

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 007 803 816 0